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Voicing the *Shekhinah*: The Ḥabad Discourse in the Seventh Generation

By

Shmaryahu Brownstein

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for

the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Near Eastern Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Jewish Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel Boyarin, Chair

Professor Niklaus Largier

Professor Chana Kronfeld

Professor Elliot Wolfson

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Abstract

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Designate Emphasis in Jewish Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel Boyarin, Chair

While much work has been done on the history and thought of Ḥabad Hasidism, there has been insufficient attention paid to the interconnectedness of the two areas, particularly as it relates to the seventh Ḥabad rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Much scholarship on Schneerson's thought does not adequately apprehend the subtle nuances of his philosophy, sufficing with analyzing his overt declarations without excavating the structures and patterns of his thinking. To greater regret, works that deal with the history and sociology of Ḥabad under R. Menachem Mendel's influence often focus almost exclusively on the political aspects of his undertakings, paying little attention to his scholarship altogether. The present dissertation seeks to provide a methodology for rectifying this lacuna, by identifying the central component of Ḥabad identity and society, as well as the primary facet of the function and definition of a Ḥabad master, namely the *ma'amar* or discourse.

The Ḥabad discourse is distinctive in its content, as well as in the ceremony that accompanies its delivery. It draws on Kabbalistic ideas, interpreted through the constructs of Ḥabad thought. It is conceived of as the “wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov,” meaning that it is supposed to promulgate and explicate the teachings and concepts conveyed by the Besht. From the second generation of Ḥabad and on, the discourse has also represented a development of ideas of the preceding rebbes. These concepts are explicit in the *Bosi legani* discourses discussed in this dissertation. Each of these discourses cites teachings from all the Ḥabad masters by name. Additionally, the notion of disseminating the wellsprings of the Besht is a recurring theme throughout this series. The ceremony of its oration includes a number of practices such as the singing of a preparatory melody and of listening to it while standing that constitute an awareness of hearing the “words of the Living G-d” as they emerge from the mouth of the rebbe.

I propose a concept called “midrashic intertextuality” as a method to understand how the discourse works and assess the metamessages it conveys. This approach interprets intertextuality as the variety of forms and “tones” the interaction between texts can take. By appreciating the relationship of Midrash to the Biblical texts it interprets, the relationship between the various texts within the Ḥabad corpus may be similarly understood, as well as that between the various rebbes who authored the texts. Thus, a new dimension of the inner lives of the rebbes, as well as of their adherents, comes into view, and enriches our insight into their society and life choices.

בס"ד

To Sorele:

‘Many are the daughters that have done great things, but you have surpassed them all.’

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Voicing the *Shekhinah*: The Habad Discourse in the Seventh Generation

Introduction – Bio-graphy: Textual Living and Live Words

In 2009, Elliot Wolfson, then professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, published a book titled *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson*. The next year, *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* was published by sociologists Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman. As their subtitles suggest, both of these books treat the same subject, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe (or simply “the Rebbe”), seventh leader of the Habad branch of the Hasidic movement. These books represent the first academic attempts at giving an account of the life of a figure of great consequence for post-Holocaust Jewish history, a decade and a half after his passing. Yet, their respective methodologies of assessing R. Menachem Mendel as a phenomenon of Jewish life in the second half of the twentieth century couldn’t differ more markedly. Wolfson was interested in Schneerson’s mystical thought and *Weltanschauung*, believing that understanding his oftentimes abstruse teachings was key to evaluating the latter’s significance as a thinker and a leader. Heilman and Friedman took the position that analyzing Schneerson’s personal correspondence with family was more revealing of his inner life than were his Hasidic writings and talks, and examination of his life choices was to be preferred above all.¹

Wolfson is a scholar of philosophy and mysticism, while Heilman and the late Friedman work(ed) in the field of sociology, and as such their divergence of approach is understandable. However, it seems to me that the two compositions differ not only methodologically, but axiomatically. Can one presume to have adequately accounted for R. Menachem Mendel’s life choices and for his Hasidim’s responses to him without tackling the repositories of his scholarship? For Wolfson the answer is unequivocally no, while for Heilman and Friedman the answer is clearly yes. *The Rebbe*’s engagement with Schneerson’s scholarly output is cursory at best, a tack for which they have drawn criticism from both academic as well as traditional Habad quarters.² Granted that the respective authors view of the reliability of the extant texts of R. Menachem Mendel’s output differ. Wolfson contends, with some reservations, that “[the] words [“the ones who wrote all these transcriptions... every word and remark of their Rebbe was holy to them... in general the matters are certainly exact”] can be applied to the Rebbe himself – our knowledge of his teaching is greatly due to the outstanding disciples who transcribed his

¹ Samuel C. Heilman, “On Writing about the Seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe and His Hasidim,” *AJS Review* 35, no. 2 (November 2011): 395.

² See Nehemia Polen, review of *The Rebbe* by Heilman and Friedman in *Modern Judaism* 34, no. 1, (February 2014): 123-134. From a Hasidic perspective, see Chaim Rapoport, *The Afterlife of Scholarship: A Critical Review of “The Rebbe” by Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman*, (Oporto Press, 2011), 10 ff.

words.”³ Heilman, for his part, argues that “the voluminous Hasidic writings and published talks... were subject to editing and ‘special understandings’ by Lubavitchers, who printed and controlled access to the originals.”⁴ Nevertheless, in either case the question of the dependability of the textual sources is an adjunct to a more basic difference about the nature of the relationship of the texts produced by Schneerson and R. Menachem Mendel himself.

In the present work I wish to address myself to this issue. I will contend that the Rebbe’s self-identity was inextricably bound up with the Hasidic texts of Ḥabad, and that this situation is exemplary of the condition of Ḥabad Hasidic culture generally. I will propose a methodology for engaging with Ḥabad texts as they are embedded within the universe of Ḥabad. My study, while not a biography, will parse a number of aspects of the Rebbe’s life, alongside a careful reading of his textual materials. In this way I hope to advance scholarship in the field of Hasidism and to open a way for scholars who might find the world of Hasidic texts to be unfamiliar terrain to develop an ear for the resonances one does well to be attuned to when reading them. Let me begin with a brief biographical account of the subject of this study.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Seventh Ḥabad Rebbe

The seventh rebbe of Ḥabad, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), was born in Nikolayev (Mykolaiv), Ukraine, to his parents, R. Levi Yitskhok (1878-1944) and Chana Schneerson (1880-1964).⁵ R. Levi Yitskhok was appointed to a rabbinic post in Yekaterinoslav (later renamed Dnipropetrovsk, now Dnipro), Ukraine, where he would serve until his arrest and exile by the Soviets in 1939. R. Menachem Mendel was a descendant of the original R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (also known as the *Tsemakh tzedek*, 1789-1866), third rebbe of Ḥabad, through his father, while on his mother’s side he descended from prominent rabbis and devotees (Hasidim) of the Ḥabad rebbes, such as Avraham David Lavut (1815-1890) and Meir Shlomo Yanovsky (1860-1933), rabbis of Nikolayev. R. Menachem Mendel’s father was himself both a relative and a devoted follower (Hasid) of the fifth Ḥabad rebbe, R. Shalom Dovber Schneersohn (Rashab, 1860-1920), while in time R. Menachem Mendel would become a son-in-law of the sixth rebbe, R. Yosef Yitskhok Schneersohn (Rayyats, 1880-1950).

Young Menachem Mendel was remembered by his contemporaries as a diligent student, whose interest in the Talmud was rivaled by his curiosity about scientific concerns (Shmotkin and Oberlander). R. Yosef Yitskhok, who was eager to have R. Menachem Mendel become part of his family and court, eventually dubbed him his “Minister of Education,” a reference to his proficiency in secular as well as Judaic knowledge. When Rayyats’s family, including R. Menachem Mendel, were granted permission to emigrate from the USSR in 1927, the latter made his way to Germany where he soon enrolled in the University of Berlin. At the end of 1928 R. Menachem Mendel married Rayyats’s daughter, Haya Mushka, who subsequently joined him in Berlin.⁶

³ Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 16.

⁴ Heilman, “On Writing about the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” 394.

⁵ For much of the biographical information here, see Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, passim.

⁶ Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 103 ff.

Pursuing a secular education was an unusual move for a would-be Hasidic rebbe. R. Menachem Mendel occupied two worlds during the following decade and a quarter; he was involved in his father-in-law's court and in his activities for the furtherance of Judaism and Ḥabad Hasidism, as well as managing some of Rayyats's personal matters.⁷ At the same time he was seeking an education in physics and mathematics in the halls of secular knowledge of Berlin and later Paris, where he ultimately received a degree in electrical engineering in 1936. With the Nazi invasion of Paris in 1940, R. Menachem Mendel's continued academic study at the Sorbonne was curtailed, as he fled with his wife to southern France, and from there they joined her parents in the United States in the spring of 1941.

In America, R. Menachem Mendel's position within the Ḥabad movement became official, as he was appointed to head up several of Rayyats's central organizations. With time, R. Menachem Mendel's activities on behalf of his father-in-law became his full-time occupation, and no further university study was pursued. When Rayyats passed away in 1950, R. Menachem Mendel was chosen to succeed him as the rebbe of Ḥabad.

"The Rebbe," as R. Menachem Mendel became widely known, began his tenure presiding over a Ḥabad following that had been decimated by Soviet Communism, the Holocaust, and general attrition from Orthodox Judaism. Yet the Rebbe's personality was able to largely unite the Ḥabad followers around him, both in the United States and abroad, and to bring in new members. The Rebbe spoke forcefully and unapologetically about the issues of his day, from the state of Judaism and Jewish education in the U.S. and in Israel to decisions being taken by the Israeli government where he felt they touched on areas of Jewish law, to concerns for Soviet Jewry. He made outreach to disaffected Jews and their education a cornerstone of his efforts. Especially from the 1960s on, the Rebbe sent more and more *shlukhim* (emissaries) to cities across the globe with the imperative to reinforce Jewish life in those locations. These missions were usually meant to be lifelong. The numbers of Ḥabad began to grow due to new recruits brought in by the *shlukhim*; but beyond this, many more Jews considered themselves somehow affiliated with the Ḥabad movement, even if they did not become full-fledged Hasidim.

It would not be wrong to see the Rebbe as a popular figure. R. Menachem Mendel spent much of his time from 1950 on meeting and corresponding with thousands of people from all walks of life and social positions, dispensing advice and guidance as well as urging and exhorting the furtherance of efforts he considered important. But evaluating the Rebbe's influence on the basis of his activities alone leaves a sorely incomplete picture of the man and of his achievements.⁸ For the Rebbe was also immersed in scholarship. He spent thousands of hours throughout his tenure speaking publicly, much of the time probing, analyzing and elucidating

⁷ The extent of R. Menachem Mendel's involvement in the affairs of Rayyats is subject to some debate; see Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 40. My assessment is based on the correspondence between the sixth and seventh rebbes published in Yosef Yitshaq Schneerson, *Igrot qodesh*, vol. 15 (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2010).

⁸ In addition to Heilman and Friedman, two other biographies of note have been published more recently. Joseph Telushkin authored *Rebbe: The Life and Teachings of Menachem M. Schneerson, the Most Influential Rabbi in Modern History* (New York: Harper Wave, 2014), and the late Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) authored *My Rebbe* (New Milford: Maggid Books, 2014). Telushkin focuses exclusively on R. Menachem Mendel's leadership, neglecting the matter of his scholarship. Steinsaltz does describe the *farbrengen*, including some focus on the content of his talks, but not in any comprehensive way. He also dedicates a few pages to the Rebbe's method of Talmudic scholarship, although not to his scope.

topics of Judaic knowledge drawn from the Talmud, the Kabbalah, and Ḥabad thought. He spent many more hours editing transcripts of his talks (which often included elucidating or expanding on ideas therein), editing, reviewing, and indexing earlier Hasidic works for publication, as well as penning scholarly insights within some of his correspondence. Any account of his life and activities must, ineluctably, include an appreciation of his thinking and scholarship.

The life of the seventh Ḥabad rebbe raises some intriguing issues. He became a Hasidic rebbe at a time and place which was distant from Hasidism's native soil, and as such, the eventuality of a continuation of the Hasidic world was not at all a given.⁹ What did it mean to R. Menachem Mendel to accept the role of rebbe? How did he see himself in that capacity, and how did he understand the meaning of being a Hasid, a follower of a rebbe, in the second half of the twentieth century? And in general, how did he reconcile continuing the institution of rebbe-hood and the Hasidic court with a world that had experienced radical rupture from that of his predecessors? In this project I will contend that a locus which can shed much light on the above questions is a series of discourses (and related material) by R. Menachem Mendel known as *Bosi legani*. I will elucidate how the phenomenon of the Ḥabad discourse is central to shaping the sociocultural identity of the affiliates of Ḥabad, including the rebbes themselves. Through analysis of both the content and the form of the *Bosi legani* texts, I believe we can gain insight into the Rebbe's inner transition from private citizen to Hasidic leader, (some of) the meaning and motivations behind this move, how he may have viewed this transition, and the way he perceived himself as a rebbe, both vis-à-vis his predecessors and vis-à-vis his followers, as well as how he understood the position of his generation and era in the arc of Jewish and world history. The exercise of parsing these texts will demonstrate that there is no robust accounting for R. Menachem Mendel's life choices that does not include the Hasidic texts that were indispensable to the formation of his identity.

The State of the Field

When surveying the scholarly work on Ḥabad, one finds that the bulk of research on the intellectual side of this form of Hasidism is concentrated on the first generations, and that a majority of scholarship on Ḥabad in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries focuses on its sociopolitical aspects. To illustrate, in Marcin Wodzinski's recent collaborative project on the history of Hasidism has given some space to some of the ideas of Ḥabad espoused by various leaders, but this extends only through the fifth generation lead by R. Shalom Dovber.¹⁰ The compendium devotes significant space to the seventh rebbe, but limits its discussion to his political and societal efforts, mentioning the phenomenon of the Rebbe's *farbrengen* (inspirational gathering), the foremost venue in which he expounded his sophisticated scholarship over thousands of hours over the course of his leadership (without considering time

⁹ Ehrlich suggests that the continuation of Ḥabad as a rebbe-less association after the passing of Rayyats was a real option, see Avrum M. Ehrlich, *Leadership in the HaBaD Movement: A Critical Evaluation of HaBaD Leadership, History, and Succession* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 2000), 338.

¹⁰ See entries on "Chabad Hasidism," "Chabad Hasidism, in the United States," and "Schneerson, Menachem Mendel (Chabad dynasty)," in the index of David Biale et al, *Hasidism: A New History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

spent in preparation), in nothing more than the caption of a photograph. This may be because the authors don't believe that twentieth century Ḥabad innovated significantly in the intellectual realm, though this might have been addressed, and I would disagree with this. Alternatively, they may be of the opinion that more recent Ḥabad is not characterized by scholarly output altogether, which is demonstrably untenable. What I am arguing for, therefore, is the imperative to reflect on the teachings of the rebbes of Ḥabad, and particularly, for our present purposes, those of R. Menachem Mendel, regardless of the kind of study being done, whether intellectual/theological, biographical, or sociopolitical.

A number of studies have been done relating to the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem M. Schneerson, in recent years. Avrum M. Ehrlich wrote on succession within Ḥabad, including the transition from the sixth to the seventh generation.¹¹ Wolfson explores the seventh rebbe's mysticism and how it informed his perspectives on the issues of the day,¹² while Heilman and Friedman's biography of the Rebbe addresses the question of how someone who aspired to a career in electrical engineering became a most influential Hasidic leader, as noted above.¹³ Yitzchak Kraus and Alon Dahan seek a unifying theory for the Rebbe's thought as well, as we'll discuss below.¹⁴ A number of others have written on specific topics within the Rebbe's life and thought.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the picture remains only partial. This is especially unfortunate, since the Rebbe's life and teaching has been documented like that of no other rebbe. He lived in the twentieth century, and no catastrophe has intervened between his tenure as rebbe and our day, so that documentation has not been lost to the ravages of time. From the start, his words were recorded in a multiplicity of media: written transcription, audio and video tapes. Furthermore, the Rebbe actively promoted visibility and public broadcast of his message; many of his later

¹¹ Ehrlich, *Leadership*.

¹² Wolfson, *Open Secret*.

¹³ Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*.

¹⁴ Yitzchak Kraus, *Ha-shevi'i: meshihiyut be-dor ha-shevi'i shel Habad* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2007). Alon Dahan, *The Final Redeemer: The Messianic Doctrine of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe*, trans. Joseph Levine (Tel Aviv: Contento, 2015), Kindle.

¹⁵ M. Avrum Ehrlich, *The Messiah of Brooklyn: Understanding Lubavitch Hasidism Past and Present* (Jersey City: KTAV, 2004), surveys the messianic teachings of the Rebbe alongside his activities. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "From Woman as Hasid to Woman as 'Tsadik' in the Teachings of the Last Two Lubavitcher Rebbes," *Jewish History* 27, no. 2/4 (December 2013): 435-473, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24709804>, focuses on the significant shift in attitudes regarding the place of women in twentieth-century Ḥabad. Jacob Gottlieb, *Sekhlanut bi-levush Hasidi: demuto shel ha-Rambam ba-Hasidut Habad* (Ramat Gan: Hotsa'at Universitat Bar-Ilan, 2009), analyzes the figure of Maimonides in Ḥabad thought, including in that of R. Menachem Mendel. Maya Balakirsky Katz, *The Visual Culture of Chabad* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), writes on the material culture of Ḥabad, including in the seventh generation. Shelly Goldberg, "Understanding the 'Hillula' of R. Yosef Y. Schneerson through the 'Hitbatlut' of R. Menachem Mendel." *Da'at*, no. 67 (2009): 55-71, discusses the relationship of *bittul* between the Rebbe and Rayyats. Morris M. Faierstein, "The Maimonidean Menorah and Contemporary Habad Messianism: A Reconsideration." *Modern Judaism* 32, no. 3 (2012): 323-334, accessed December 14, 2021, muse.jhu.edu/article/491062, argues for a connection between Ḥabad interest in Maimonides and its messianism. Naftali Loewenthal has written in number of places about Ḥabad's seventh generation, often in the context of a comparative study of a given topic's understanding by the various Ḥabad rebbes, see especially Naftali Loewenthal, *Hasidism Beyond Modernity: Essays in Habad Thought and History* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2019). See also the list of studies relating to R. Menachem Mendel in Ariel Roth, *Ketsad liqro et sifrut Habad* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017), 11 fn4.

orations were available for viewing on television, he was regularly the subject of journalistic interviews and articles, and his emissaries, stationed throughout the world, were effective in making “Chabad” (the preferred spelling within the movement) a household word. Yet to date most studies are preoccupied with the popular image of the Ḥabad movement and with its more sensational aspects such as its particular kind of messianism, while neglecting to probe beyond the surface and to endeavor to properly parse the theoretical teachings espoused by the Rebbe. This has led to misreadings of the seventh rebbe’s motivations, as well as of the nature of his bond with his devotees that enabled him to achieve the impact he had during his lifetime, one that has been able to translate into an enduring influence on his Hasidim more than two decades after his passing.

In this way, the above observations regarding the inadequate use made of R. Menachem Mendel’s articulated thought in more sociologically inclined studies is also relevant to how his teachings have been treated in scholarly works as well. These studies too neglect to present a methodology for appreciating particular ideas of his in the context of his overall thought. Thus, for example, Kraus surveys the Rebbe’s conception of the era of his leadership as “the seventh generation” (a concept that I will deal with in this work) and “the final generation of exile and the first generation of redemption.”¹⁶ He methodically collates teachings of the Rebbe throughout his tenure, showing how R. Menachem Mendel’s messianic urgency intensified over the years, and how this translated into the outreach activism Ḥabad became known for. However, Kraus limits himself to reading the passages themselves, without offering an approach to considering the fundamental hermeneutics the Rebbe employs that generate the particular ideas he espouses.

Discussions by Avrum Ehrlich¹⁷ and Ada Rapoport-Albert¹⁸ similarly offer cogent insights into R. Menachem Mendel’s thought on a variety of issues but stop short at describing a systematic philosophy that would provide the bedrock for these views and would tie them together with his positions on myriad other issues. Even Naftali Loewenthal, who elsewhere does supply such a system for the early generations of Ḥabad,¹⁹ has not reviewed the positions of the seventh rebbe with similar systematicness.²⁰ Alon Dahan has indeed laid out a comprehensive framework within which to assess the Rebbe’s outlook, namely that of his messianic doctrine.²¹ In Dahan’s opinion, the Rebbe’s view of his generation as being that of the final messianic redemption and of himself as the Messiah influenced his unique interpretations of the Ḥabad traditions that had come down to him. Nevertheless, it seems to me that he does not adequately appraise the centrality of the Ḥabad discourse to Ḥabad Hasidism overall and its specific aspects as performed by R. Menachem Mendel; as a result, he misreads the messianic impulse of seventh generation Ḥabad. Rather than messianism being the core conception from which all else extends, it is the subtle, often ambiguous mysticism taught in the discourses that motivates that messianism, and that therefore defines it.

¹⁶ Kraus, *Ha-shevi'i*.

¹⁷ Ehrlich, *The Messiah of Brooklyn*.

¹⁸ Rapoport-Albert, “From Woman as Hasid.”

¹⁹ Naftali Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

²⁰ Loewenthal, *Hasidism Beyond Modernity*.

²¹ Dahan, *The Final Redeemer*.

Someone who would wholeheartedly agree to this final point about misconstruing the Rebbe's messianism is Elliot Wolfson.²² His assessment of the Rebbe's thought is one that fully engages its mysticism and that appreciates its interwovenness with the mystical meditations of his predecessors. While Wolfson does not focus on the format of the *maymer* (discourse) per se, he is very much alive to the primacy of the subtleties of thought for which the *maymer* serves as the predominant vehicle as the bedrock upon which the Rebbe's thought is built. "These doctrines [contained in the Rebbe's sermons, discourses, and epistles] were the bone and breath of his being. There is no conceptual ground to distinguish in Schneerson's mind between social reality and its imaginal counterpart."²³ As such, he indeed rejects speculation about the Rebbe's messianic identity as a distraction from a more important question, "the nature of the messianism he promulgated."²⁴ Whether one accepts his formulation of what that nature is, his prioritization of the mystical/theoretical as what is salient in the Rebbe's work is, it seems to me, on point.

It is my contention that R. Menachem Mendel's teachings offer the underpinnings of his numerous activities and campaigns, and that these occupy a position of primary importance in assessing his actions. Even as one might be loath to "take the Rebbe's word for it" when accounting for steps he took, it seems unquestionable to me that his expressed thinking on a given matter represented a significant motivating factor in his choices. But beyond this, these disparate thoughts and teachings form particular elements of an overall system of thought, a philosophy or *Weltanschauung*, that, accurately understood, points toward a more textured and nuanced appreciation of the Rebbe's particular stances. Moreover, the fundamental wellspring that nourishes this philosophy lies at the nexus of all seven masters of Ḥabad and their teachings, namely the *maymer*. The divine revelation that is the discourse is the key to understanding the Rebbe's self-perception, his conception of his own purpose and how he ranked his priorities. It is the aim of this current project to offer a pathway to understanding the *maymer*: what it is, what it represents in Ḥabad society and culture, how to make sense of it, and how to appreciate the ways that it resonates in the ears of the Ḥabad Hasid.

The Difficulty

I have argued for the necessity of incorporating R. Menachem Mendel's thought into any assessment of his life and activities. I have claimed that this is often insufficiently achieved. At times his texts are overlooked and at others they are misrepresented. It therefore behooves me to spend some time on elaborating on what the difficulty of properly understanding the Ḥabad *maymer* is. To do so I will include here a passage from one of the *Bosi legani* discourses I intend to discuss, to give some idea of their structure and content. This excerpt consists of several sentences from the seventh chapter of the original discourse of R. Yosef Yitskhok (that of 1950). When reading this passage, we should consider the following questions: First, what does the passage mean? What is expected of the hearer or reader so that they be able to make sense of it? Second, what universe of discourse does it partake of? What genre of Jewish intellectual output is it ensconced in, and what assumptions does it make? Finally, what message does it intend to

²² Wolfson, *Open Secret*.

²³ *Ibid*, 29.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 272.

convey? How does Rayyats (in this case) hope his audience will make use of the content he conveys here? Following the passage, I will offer a brief commentary on its salient features and the difficulties they pose. Rayyats begins Chapter VII of his discourse thus:

Now the letter *yod* which is on the letter *dalet*, through which the design of the *dalet* is differentiated from the design of the *resh*, is specifically on its hind part. The *yod*, although the smallest of all the letters, is the beginning of all the letters; for each letter begins with the letter *yod*. This is the [notion] that “By the *yod* was the world-to-come created” (b*Menahot*, 29b). Regarding this it says, ‘For all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth’ (I Chronicles, 29:11), which the Targum translates as “which unites heaven and earth.” This is the Sefirah of *yesod* (Foundation), from which *malkhut* (Sovereignty) receives.²⁵

Before commenting on the content of this short passage, let us first note that the answers to the prompts given above are by no means obvious. The paragraph is abstruse, and the coherence of its components are not easily grasped. What is evident from an initial perusal is that it deals with certain letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It also draws on the Bible, the Talmud, and a Targum. The term “Sefirah” alerts one to the presence of a connection to the Kabbalah. Upon closer inspection one notices that there is a suggestion here that something may be simultaneously “small” and “the beginning of all,” that this small something can be considered that “which unites heaven and earth,” and is a source from which another entity “receives.” Thus we might say that there is a kind of philosophy at work here, a perspective on reality. This perspective draws on the canon of traditional Jewish scholarship, in this case the Tanakh, the Talmud, and the Kabbalah.

One might wonder what language the original text is written in. The quotations from Chronicles and *Menahot* would suggest at least some Hebrew, while the reference to a Targum suggests the presence of Aramaic. In fact, while the discourses were customarily initially recited orally in Yiddish, they were transcribed and studied as a Hebrew text. Even so, the Hebrew is a rabbinic one, following more closely the patterns of the sources it cites, rather than a modern one. Thus, aside from the difficulties of the content, one might be challenged by a lack of facility with the languages it uses, or at least with some unfamiliarity with the connotations of its idiom.

Now granted that I have presented this selection entirely out of context. However, even contextually, the passage is not very different from the rest of the text but is exemplary of it. Certainly, the hearer/reader would be expected to have read the chapters leading up to here; but beyond this, they would have to have a familiarity with Biblical texts, Talmudic texts, and with the style of the Talmud’s use of Biblical texts, as well as a conception of what the Hebrew letters signify within Talmud and Kabbalistic thought, and some initiation into Kabbalistic notions and ideas. This, then, is the ideal reader whom this passage addresses.

On the question of genre, the Ḥabad discourse is meant to convey teachings that will lead the Hasid along the path of the Hasidic ideals. Ultimately, its recondite language is expected to be translated into some level of application in personal improvement and enhanced religious commitment. One might well ask, in that case, why the recourse to such esoterica? Could not an exhortation to piety be expressed in much less specialized terminology and be made that much

²⁵ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Torat Menahem: sefer ha-ma’amarim bati legani*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn: Lahak Hanochos Inc.), 16 (Arabic numerals).

more accessible to the ordinary individual? Indeed, even within *Bosi legani* itself one finds sections that hew much more closely to what one might expect to find in a typical maggidic-pietistic sermon in the style of *mussar*. Rather, there is value that the Ḥabad expositor places on the very articulation of these obscure constructs, beyond the applicable message. Or, more accurately, the personal development of the Hasid is meant to be achieved via the absorbing and cogitating on these mystical ideas. The Kabbalistic aspect to these discourses is considered a facet of their revelatory ability to draw down the presence of the divine.

This quality of the Ḥabad discourse to make the divine realm “real” to the Hasidic community actually provides a framework from within which a member of Ḥabad understands the world around them. For example, the description here of the dynamic of bestowal between benefactor and beneficiary can be seen as correlating with the relationship between a rebbe and his Hasid (and even between R. Menachem Mendel and Rayyats). The divine Sephirot of *yesod* and *malkhut* referenced here may be mapped on to the persons and eras of the sixth and seventh rebbes of Ḥabad (I will elaborate on this at length in the ensuing chapters). What is the nature of their relationship as described through this subtle construct? One would certainly do well to have a thoroughgoing knowledge of what the Sephirot of *yesod* and *malkhut* represent within the Kabbalistic and (Ḥabad) Hasidic works in order to articulate most fully what using them as a paradigm for the relationship between any two individuals is meant to suggest.

This, then, is the challenge of presented by the *maymer*, both for the student of Ḥabad thought and of the lives of its leaders and adherents. It is to the task of somewhat demystifying the workings of this genre that I set myself in the foregoing chapters. Below I will outline some thoughts on what making the *maymer* accessible will entail.

A Methodology for Assessing the Ḥabad Discourse

I referred to the *maymer* as the nexus of all seven Ḥabad masters and their teachings, and I should elaborate on this briefly, as this concept goes to the heart of my thesis in these pages. First of all, any given *maymer* is intertextually linked with discourses of earlier generations of rebbes. This is not merely a textual curiosity but is central to what the *maymer* is; it is the perpetuation of the divine revelation constituted by its predecessor *maymorim*. The term “intertextuality” is used in many different ways in the realm of literary criticism, and I will discuss it at some depth in a later chapter; however, for now suffice it to note that in the Ḥabad discourse intertextuality describes not only the relationship between texts, but also that which exists between expounders of those texts. Thus, it exceeds the bounds of textuality and enters the realm of the phenomenological.

A corollary of the above notion is that the production of the *maymer* represents the central function of the Ḥabad rebbe, and defines his identity as such. Beyond the myriad other expectations of Hasidim from their rebbe, he is first and foremost the one who can produce a *maymer*, one who is able to be a point of contact between the Hasid and the transcendent realm from which the discourse derives. By the same token, one who produces Ḥabad discourses is manifesting his identity as a rebbe, and a rank-and-file Hasid, therefore, would not presume to do so. It is for this reason that I am arguing for the indispensability of considering the discourses in

particular, over and above the other genres of R. Menachem Mendel's output such as sermons and epistles, to achieve a sufficiently nuanced position on his opinions and choices. Over the years of his rebbeiship he operated consummately as rebbe, and his identity as rebbe is shaped and illuminated by the discourses he generated. As a phenomenon that represents the point of contact between all the generations of Habad leaders, this means that R. Menachem Mendel's identity as rebbe consisted primarily in his ability to re-present his predecessors through re-viewing their teachings, and that therefore his messianic conceptions, outreach activities, and so forth, must be contextualized as emerging from this core capacity.

Here I am anticipated by Wolfson to an extent, who understands the seventh rebbe as conceiving of time in a manner that allows for such a making present of those of the past to occur. In his words, "the hermeneutic at play in Schneerson's thinking... champions a temporal configuration that is circular in its linearity and linear in its circularity."²⁶ Wolfson's observations point to the imperative of seeing R. Menachem Mendel's re-presentation of the past and his urgent anticipation of the messianic future as each being implied in the other, thus lending credence to my position that one emerges from the other. Of course, the Rebbe's messianic conception is the subject of Wolfson's study. Here, however, I will focus only a little attention on my understanding of the Rebbe's messianism, as this deserves its own study that is beyond my scope here. I will also have to limit myself with regard to properly parsing Wolfson's assessments of the Rebbe's thought and responding to them due to constraints of time and space. I will suffice with briefly remarking on his observations when appropriate and referencing them where I cannot comment. My overarching project now is to lay out the workings of the discourse itself; I hope to more fully develop the implications of my thesis which I allude to in the final chapter and to conduct a more robust dialogue with Wolfson in a future iteration of this study.

Bosi legani, the series of discourses at the heart of this study, originates as discourses of R. Shalom Dovber which were repeated and somewhat modified by his son Rayyats, and then reinvented by R. Menachem Mendel. Through them we are able to trace the development of ideas from earlier Habad writings down to the Rebbe's own variation on them. Thus, the *Bosi legani* series offers a prism through which R. Menachem Mendel's trajectory as a rebbe is projected. The study of these discourses lays bare the passage he made from Hasid to rebbe. *Bosi legani* represents the final teachings of Rayyats, on the basis of which the Rebbe delivered discourses of his own annually on the anniversary of his assumption of the role of leader. In his discourses the Rebbe reworks the words of Rayyats, this reworking being more than a commentary; it is an act of becoming a rebbe, of making the authority of the discourse one's own through interpretation. R. Menachem Mendel's transition may also be illuminated by comparing the notes he supplied in the original discourses of Rayyats before the latter's passing with his later discourses on those same chapters.

Drawing on descriptions of the realities of the time this passage took place within the Habad community, and how this may have impacted R. Menachem Mendel's ascension to leadership, I speculate on how this may be reflected in the teachings. What is the significance, for example, of the Rebbe's insistence that "the leader of our generation" is "my father-in-law, the Rebbe?" What was the source for R. Menachem Mendel's particular brand of devotion to his predecessor, which differed in significant ways from the attitudes of earlier rebbes? Related to this, it can be argued that the Rebbe saw his right to his position as contingent on his wife, who

²⁶ Ibid, 23.

was Rayyats's daughter. What part did Haya Mushka ("the Rebbetzin") play in her husband's concept of his leadership, and why? I will suggest a possible understanding of these social realities through the teachings of the discourses. Rather than definitively accounting for R. Menachem Mendel's choices in this way, I will rather conjecture about how they might be motivated by the discourses, as a way of applying the method of incorporating the theoretical into the social in understanding Ḥabad.

My suggested approach would impinge upon a number of other questions as well. Is Hasidim transferable? In what ways may Hasidism be viably translated into the current epoch, if at all? Or, to formulate this another way: More needs to be elucidated about the nature and appeal of Hasidism, both in its initial stages as well as today, particularly in light of its survival of and resurgence since the Holocaust, and its transplantation from Eastern Europe to the West.²⁷ The thought of a Rebbe who at once believed that such translation was possible while simultaneously embracing modernity (to an extent explicitly and to a greater extent implicitly²⁸) provides an excellent testing ground to evaluate the possibilities of continuities, innovation, and rupture with Hasidism as it had once been. I do not intend to address this issue directly here, but I hope that what I offer opens a new door to considering these questions yet again. Having broadened the scope of inquiry from the individual to the collective, the present work relates not only to how the Rebbe's thought illuminates his own history but how it shapes the Hasidic community.

Wolfson observes that the majority of the Rebbe's audience likely did not comprehend what he was truly teaching.²⁹ This is undoubtedly so; however, for one that did endeavor to apprehend the Rebbe's messages, they would have begun with a review of all that the Rebbe had expounded in the course of gathering, a *farbrengen*.³⁰ This might have consisted of several "talks" (*sikhes*) and a "discourse" (*maymer*). If one studied the contents of a given *farbrengen* with sufficient attention to detail, they would become aware of its own intratextuality, noticing themes that recur in a number of contexts, say, in the esoteric, exoteric, and pragmatic realms of Torah thought. One might observe that a theme is developed from a number of angles, thus filling out a balanced perspective of what had been said. On many occasions a theme might not be exhaustively treated in a single *farbrengen* and would be returned to at a forthcoming occasion. One would then need to reconsider the implications of what the Rebbe had said previously in light of new information. Thus, the more one contextualizes the utterances of the Rebbe, the more attuned they become to their resonances and connotations.

²⁷ Joseph Dan has raised related questions and offered his resolution of them in "Hasidism: The Third Century," in Ada Rapoport-Albert, ed. *Hasidism Reappraised* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996) 415-426, ProQuest. Arthur Green has countered some of Dan's conclusions in the same volume in "Early Hasidism: Some Old/New Questions," *ibid*, 446.

²⁸ I do not mean to suggest that the Rebbe embraced modernity without qualification, or that he did not at times harshly criticize its perceived failings. I refer to the Rebbe's view that the new age and situation held much potential for the reinforcement of traditional Jewish values, and that developments of modernity were not all negative or to be shunned. (E.g. broadcast on radio and television, enthusiasm for America, space exploration, atomic energy, developments in medicine etc.) See Schneerson, *Liqute sihot* (Brooklyn: Vaad L'hafotzos Sichos, 2001), 15:42-48.

²⁹ Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 29. Wolfson, "Revealing and Re/veiling: Menahem Mendel Schneerson's Messianic Secret," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 26 (2012): 56.

³⁰ A detailed discussion of terms and concepts in the foregoing is given in Ch Background.

On the broadest level, the context for a specific utterance of the Rebbe's is the entirety of what he articulated over the more than forty years of his public addresses. This is, of course, a tall order to fill; however, it does point to the fact that the more one studies of R. Menachem Mendel's pronouncements, the greater is their sensitivity to the nuances of what he says on a particular occasion.³¹ Not only for the Hasid, but for the scholar that wishes to critically assess R. Menachem Mendel's thought, it is desirable that they develop a sense of the resonance of the individual granules of his thought within their native context, where they exist as part of a holistic whole, and not as soundbites or disconnected citations. This will temper the possibly misleading effects of selective quotation, where the citation serves a purpose different from its parent context, and where fidelity to its original meaning is often not the goal.

Additionally, adequate contextualization allows one to hear the thought as it might have been heard by the Rebbe's audience, and by the broader Hasidic community that consumed his product, giving us a more accurate view of its *sitz im leben*. Granted that many of the aforementioned may not have fully understood their rebbe or even been capable of doing so; nevertheless, as people that had an intimate familiarity with the atmosphere around the Rebbe and with his style of speech, many intuitively understood that which may have eluded them cognitively. Wolfson posits that the animating principle of the Rebbe's thought is what he terms "esoteric dissimulation," where the words as spoken cannot be taken at face value, and that the subtleties couched within the Rebbe's phraseologies have eluded most Hasidim (not to mention many scholars of the academy).³² I would accept this only partially, although here is not the place to engage this question. I believe that there is intellectual value to the ways that Hasidim have understood the Rebbe, at any rate among the Hasidic scholars.

A third benefit to full contextualization is that it makes the exegesis that the Rebbe is invariably performing on earlier authoritative sources that much more visible to us, allowing us to discern and distinguish the conservative elements in the Rebbe's words from the radical. At times it may even complicate our assumptions regarding the radicality of a given statement. While in the current composition I do not analyze the entirety of the *farbrengen* in which the discourses I discuss are embedded, this would be a desideratum. I do, however, analyze segments of the relevant discourses, while pulling in passages at other points in the discourse or from the *Bosi legani* corpus as a whole that illuminate the aspects of the passages being parsed.

In order to properly evaluate what the Hasidic discourses of the Rebbe have to teach us it is necessary to examine not only their content, but also to understand their structure and significance. Earlier I referred to them as revelatory. This sets them apart in certain respects from other genres of Jewish oratory, such as *derashot*, sermons, delivered by *darshanim*, sermonizers, or *maggidim*, those who deliver pietistic sermons in the style of *mussar*. At the same time the Ḥabad discourses retain certain similarities with these genres. In the Ḥabad tradition the discourses are known as *derushim*, expositions, or *ma'amarim*, discourses, and have a distinct format and set of conventions. Within these conventions there are variations from rebbe to rebbe, and R. Menachem Mendel's idiosyncratic style should be identified. Attention must also be paid the relationship of the Rebbe's discourses to the teachings of the earlier rebbes of Ḥabad, so that we are able to describe how the Rebbe makes use of them. Additionally, it is important to appreciate the format in which the discourse is delivered and produced, both as an oration and as

³¹ See my response to Roth in Ch Bittul, "Bringing the Wondrous Closer."

³² Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 4.

a literary artifact. These aspects of the discourse allow us to hear the tone of its words, enabling us to avoid misconstruing them. The structure and formal elements of the Ḥabad discourse are fundamental components of how it makes meaning.

Intertextuality in the *Maymer*

The notion that a text signifies not only through its explicit statements but also via its format is basal to the construct of intertextuality. In the context of the Ḥabad discourse, and particularly those of the seventh rebbe, attunement to its intertextuality is essential, as it is the stratum where the Rebbe's novel contribution (*khiddesh*) is most fully discoverable. Ḥabad Hasidic discourses are often based on the discourses of earlier masters, something which is ubiquitous and rendered explicit in the Rebbe's thought. It is possible to view the inner workings of a discourse by excavating those elements that are drawn from previous rebbes and identifying the novel formulation of the discourse's own author. Then we are able to hear the author's own voice from amid the inherited cache of quotations and paraphrases embedded in his discourse, and to perceive his unique approach to interpreting the material.³³ At times the reformulation may be simply making what is implicit in an earlier teaching explicit; even so, we can usually detect a new resonance and a shift in emphasis that is occasioned by this repetition. This is something that the Rebbe himself commented on on occasion, identifying the *khiddesh* in another rebbe's words.

The above insight points to a broader requirement of the student of Ḥabad, of Hasidism, as well as of earlier layers of Jewish scholarship, which is to be aware of and sensitive to what is inherited and what is new. Within the Jewish scholarly tradition, there is a strong conservative element which privileges the received as being of utmost weight. Recognition of references to earlier sources means identification of moments at which the tradition is invoked in order to appeal to its authority to support the (often cloaked) novel or radical claims being made. But it is essential not to mistake those moments as radical in themselves; on the contrary, they are best understood when viewed as truly conservative without any pretensions of innovation. The critic must both acknowledge the dependence of a given statement (say, of the Rebbe's) as well as recognize how it reworks its (canonical) source.

The presence of this quality in Ḥabad discourses, and its special iteration in the discourses of the Rebbe who makes his dependence more explicit, underscores the relations between the various rebbes and the ways that their authority is used in support of the given rebbe under discussion. The network of ideas and the intertextuality of the discourses enact negotiations of authority that transcend the paper. I want to emphasize that I do not mean that this intertextuality represents or acts as a metaphor for these negotiations, but that it is through these intertextual invocations that these negotiations are made.

Daniel Boyarin has shown that the notion of intertextuality is a meaningful construct through which to appreciate the operations occurring within Midrash.³⁴ The two concepts that I

³³ See Ch Intertextuality, "A Brief History of Intertextuality."

³⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

draw from him in particular are thematization, how the Midrash reenacts the anomalies in the Biblical text in the course of commenting on them, and the overlap of textual thinking and lived reality in the world of the Midrashic Rabbis. Thinking of the Ḥabad texts as a genre related to that of Midrash would suggest that the kinds of intertextuality evidenced in each respective corpus could illuminate the other. Boyarin's observations with regard to Midrash argue for a specialized intertextual practice being employed there. I want to extend his insights further, by locating what it is that is characteristic to Midrash in contrast to other genres of Jewish writing, and thus to deepen the definition of the intertextuality of Midrash. When applied to the Ḥabad corpus, my expansions on Boyarin provide an enlightening framework within which to assess the discourses of the rebbes.

The focus of my project is thus to read a Ḥabad discourse with a method that enables its latent elements to emerge, allowing its significance to be more fully and accurately appreciated. In the course of doing so, however, I trust that I will be making some contribution to the field of Midrashic studies, as well as to the discourse on intertextuality. If I have managed to make accessible aspects of any one of these areas to those situated in any of the other fields, I will count myself successful.

Apologia

Here I must address several matters which it might have been helpful had I remarked on them at the outset, but which it seemed better to place after introducing my subject. The first of these matters is that of objectivity: Can a Ḥabad Hasid write critically about the Rebbe? I acknowledge that I am a Ḥabad Hasid not only by birth and upbringing but in my current lifestyle. On the one hand, I am intimately familiar with the locution and style of the rebbes' discourses, having been immersed in their study for decades. From this vantage point I am in a position to contribute to the understanding of these difficult texts in a way that many of those who write on Hasidism are not. On the other hand, as someone who refers to R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson as "the Rebbe" both within in this work and personally, I am perhaps too close to my subject to see it clearly. However, despite the heading to this segment, I do not intend to engage in apologetics in this work, and hope that I will be judged to have met my objective. I have tried to the best of my ability to describe matters as they are, to argue against what seem to me to be errors in the work of others on methodological grounds rather than engage in polemics, and to allow each reader to make of what I present what they may. I do not attempt to persuade anyone about the validity of any truth-claims made by the texts I cite; only that those are the truth-claims being made. If my tone is too respectful for the tastes of some, I trust that my arguments are nevertheless made in good faith and hold up to the scrutiny of criticism. As others have argued before me, no one is without bias, but it is the task of the scholar to be willing to challenge their own partiality.³⁵

This leads us into the questions of spelling choices and of nomenclature. Using the spelling "G-d" when referring to the deity as invoked in Jewish sources is done in accordance with a certain religious conviction held on my part that this is a requirement of *Halakhah*.³⁶ I will

³⁵ See Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19 ff.

³⁶ I am preceded in this by Loewenthal in *Communicating the Infinite*.

address certain other (mis)spellings of references to the divine shortly. I trust that my readers will find that the attitude that engenders these spellings does not preclude me from saying what has to be said about the issues I raise here. On a similar note, it is the case that in my mind and in my personal life I think of Rabbi Schneerson as “the Rebbe” and revere him as role model, mentor, source of wisdom and more. I do believe, at the same time, that he personally encouraged and enabled the critique of his audience and promoted independent thought among his followers (perhaps not as successfully as might have been possible).

Having said this, there is another consideration in my choices of nomenclature here. As I am endeavoring to recreate to some extent the resonance of the teachings of the rebbes within the Ḥabad ambit, I have opted for appellations that are commonly used within the culture in which their texts live. Thus I do not use their last name(s), and refer to them mostly by the acronyms by which they are commonly called. As the rebbes mostly shared the same last name Schneerson (or Schneersohn), this also avoids confusion about whom the reference is to. In the case of the first two rebbes who are not generally referred to within Ḥabad by acronyms but rather by cognomina (the *Alter rebbe*, the *Mitteler rebbe*), I felt it appropriate to use their given names (with the prefix R. for Rabbi) on the main, and on occasion to resort to their more familiar titles. The third rebbe, whose name was Menachem Mendel like the seventh rebbe, I refer to primarily as the *Tsemakh Tsedek*, as he is known in Ḥabad, to avoid confusion. The fourth, fifth, and sixth rebbes are Maharash, Rashab, and Rayyats, the acronyms of their names by which they are commonly, if not ubiquitously, called. The seventh rebbe was not known as rebbe by any title other than “the Rebbe,” although as Rayyats’s son-in-law he was called “Ramash,” just as his elder brother-in-law was called “Rashag” (and continued to be so called after the Rebbe’s ascension to the leadership). Since the appellation of “Ramash” fell into disuse after 1950, and Ramam (or RMM) as he is sometimes referred to in the scholarship was never used in Ḥabad, I chose to use “R. Menachem Mendel” to refer to him in his pre-rebbe days as well as during his transition into rebbehood, while mostly using “the Rebbe” when referring to R. Menachem Mendel as rebbe.

A final consideration is that the appellations of the rebbes is an integral part of the *Bosi legani* discourses, since each such discourse mentions each rebbe, usually by name. Thus, I felt that the use of the more traditional modes of reference would be more in keeping with the spirit of the discourses. This same striving for attunement with the resonances of the discourses influenced the spellings of the divine names in the quoted passages and in my commentary on them, as they are traditionally read deliberately incorrectly as *HaWaYaH* for the Tetragrammaton and *Elokim* for *E-lohim* (see above regarding the hyphen).

The Hasidic circle over which the Rebbe presided is known by the names Ḥabad and Lubavitch, and at times both together, Ḥabad-Lubavitch. Ḥabad, an acrostic of *ḥokhmah*, *binah*, *da’at* (wisdom, understanding, knowledge) relates to the philosophy founded by R. Schneur Zalman, the first rebbe, that distinguishes his line and their adherents from other branches of Hasidism. Lubavitch is the name of the town in White Russia where the rebbes resided for a longer period than they did anywhere else, and is used as a name for the dynasty much in the same way that other Hasidic groups are known by the names of their towns. Additionally, since the sons of the *Tsemakh Tsedek* set up a number of Ḥabad courts in different towns (Kopust, Liady, Nyezhin, etc.), it became necessary to differentiate which branch of Ḥabad one was referring to while these lines were extant.³⁷ After the 1920s the other branches became obsolete

³⁷ See Ehrlich, *Leadership*, 211 ff.

and only Habad-Lubavitch remained, but the hyphenated name persists. Nevertheless, I use “Habad” throughout rather than “Lubavitch.” This is because for one thing my focus is on the intellectual component of the group, heir to the legacy of R. Schneur Zalman’s Habad system, rather than on the social phenomenon. This is also the term that has much wider recognition, being identified by many with the Chabad Houses and outreach centers established by R. Menachem Mendel’s *shlukhim*, as well as enjoying wide use in scholarship.

The transliteration of Habad, as well as of many other Hebrew and Yiddish words, presents a number of conundrums. The movements own preferred spelling, as well as that used in media and popular culture, is “Chabad.” Since I am focusing on the textual and theoretical aspects rather than the social, I chose a spelling that highlights its being a transliteration of the Hebrew acronym חב"ד, Habad. As I am working specifically with texts, it is apposite to use a more precise transliteration that differentiates between the letters *hê* and *het*, so I do not use the spelling “Habad.”

In dealing with the transliteration of Hebrew terms, these can appear in several contexts. They may be part of Hebrew phrase, such as a Biblical verse or Talmudic passage, which would warrant conventional Hebrew transliteration. Within standard Hebrew transliteration there is an academic format appropriate for precision with regard to the spelling of the words, as well as a more general format that provides correct pronunciation without the complexity of trying to represent every Hebrew letter distinctly. Hebrew words may be components of a Yiddish aphorism, in which case the conventional Yiddish modes of transliteration would be appropriate. However, there is a medial area, and these are Hebrew or Aramaic terms that are commonly used in Habad discourse and are pronounced with the Ashkenazi pronunciation. Thus, the word for the discourse is *ma’amar*, but is colloquially pronounced *maymer*.

I have chosen to represent Hebrew/Aramaic words cited from a non-Habad context using an academic Hebrew transliteration system, while names of books will appear in a general-purpose style.³⁸ Hebrew terms cited in a Yiddish context will follow the conventions of Yiddish transliteration.³⁹ Hebrew/Aramaic within the Habad context that represent commonly used terms or expressions will be given a Yiddish transliteration, while I will note its accepted Hebrew transliteration at the first use. Thus, when discussing its use in a Midrash, I use “*bati le-ganni*,” while in the context of the discourses I give “*bosi legani*.” If there is only a slight difference between the Hebrew and Yiddish pronunciations, I will leave the word in the Hebrew form. In this way I am working toward making the reader at home within the Habad universe of discourse.

I will note that within Habad there is a distinct transliteration system that differs from either of those mentioned above. In the Library of Congress cataloguing the names of its books and of their authors are given with the Habad system. It seemed unnecessary to me to follow that convention in this context. The one exception that I have made is for the names of the Rebbe and his wife. Since they used their own transliteration of their names when spelling or signing them in English, I do not consider this a transliteration at all on my part. Thus (unlike the *Tsemakh Tsedek*) the Rebbe’s name is spelled “Menachem.” Mrs. Schneerson’s name I spell Haya Mushka, as this was her given name, although she signed it “Moussia H.”; I retain the “H” in

³⁸ Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). The academic style I use with some modifications.

³⁹ YIVO.

spelling her first name. The Rebbe's mother's name is spelled "Chana," as she spelled it in English.

As might be expected, there is a large amount of translated material included in this work, including my translations of two full discourses as part of the addenda. All translations from Hebrew, Aramaic or Yiddish are mine, unless otherwise noted. This, too, is at least in part an effort to preserve the sense in which these texts are used within Ḥabad, even if at times diverging from the standard translations.

Layout of the Dissertation

I have set out here the challenge posed by the Ḥabad discourse, both for understanding it in its own right, as well as for properly appreciating its place within the universe of Ḥabad. I have laid out the work that has already been done in this area and noted the lacunae that I perceive in the scholarship so far. I have articulated how I feel these gaps can be addressed and outlined of a methodology for doing so. Now I am ready to present the material of the *Bosi legani* texts, and to work it through.

The next chapter will provide an outline of the history of the Ḥabad Hasidic tradition, its leaders and development. This will include historical material on the Rebbe in particular, especially as it relates to the discourses. It describes the phenomenon of the Ḥabad *maymer* (discourse), its formats of presentation (oral delivery, written and printed material, the unitary or serial styles of discourses, etc.), and its significance within the culture of the Ḥabad Hasidic communities. After consideration of the *maymer* in the first six generations of Ḥabad, I turn specifically to the phenomenon of the Ḥabad discourse in the seventh generation, identifying its key characteristics and noting the ways in which it continues the tradition as well as where it deviates from it. This chapter defines a number of key terms and concepts, largely drawn from the field of Kabbalah, that are fundamental in Ḥabad thought, such as Sephirot, *šimšum*, and the notion of the significance of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The third chapter will begin to describe the hermeneutics employed by the Rebbe in his treatment of his predecessor's work. The framework I find apt within which these hermeneutics can be best viewed is a type of intertextuality that I refer to as "midrashic." Both parts of the phrase "midrashic intertextuality" require careful and nuanced definition and parsing; what does it mean to be "midrashic," and what is described by the term "intertextuality?" The central submission conveyed in the term "midrashic intertextuality" is that it is present when a text enacts an effacement of any barrier between it and its referent texts. In this chapter I focus on attaining a working definition of what is "midrashic" about Midrash, and therefore what it is that would make any text "midrashic," i.e. partaking in some way of the nature of Midrash, even if not technically belonging to that genre of literature. This will allow me to characterize the Ḥabad texts as "midrashic," substantiated particularly through a careful reading of the treatment of certain Midrashic texts within the discourses of the rebbes of Ḥabad.

The fourth chapter goes on to define the word "intertextuality" in the phrase "midrashic intertextuality." Here I show that "intertextuality" is a concept that relates to the tone that one text adopts in its relation to another in the intertextual process. I suggest some ways that careful reading of a text may uncover the nature of its interwovenness with the text it dialogues with,

whether that by ironic, ambivalent, submissive, or exercising the “space of agency.” In this chapter I will also apply these theoretical concepts to the Ḥabad discourses I am studying here.

The fifth chapter is the point at which we are prepared for a sustained reading of passages from the *Bosi legani* discourses in light of the hermeneutics proposed. This chapter will include summaries of the discourses of *Bosi legani* that are the subject of this study (their full texts in English translation are provided in the addenda to this work). The methodical study of the discourse passages will demonstrate that it is through this approach that one comes to appreciate the metamessages of the Ḥabad teachings that extend beyond the particular argument of the discourse. These metamessages are what shape the Ḥabad *Weltanschauung* and are indispensable to fully decoding the impact of the *maymer*.

The concluding chapter will assess how theoretical concepts within the discourses and their hermeneutics may be seen as enacted within the biographical details of the Rebbe’s life and leadership, illustrating the central space occupied by the *maymer* in being formative of identity for the Rebbe and for Ḥabad society. The objective of this chapter is to point to the direction that opens up through the method of reading I submit for assessing sociohistorical aspects of Ḥabad, in this case in the seventh generation. At this point I am unable to fully develop this endeavor within the limitations of this study. I show how the discourses illuminate phenomena within three areas of the Rebbe’s leadership of Ḥabad, namely gender, messianism, and his own rebbehood. The hermeneutics of midrashic intertextuality and the reading of entire units of Hasidic thought as context for specific kernels of thought set the stage for addressing broader issues in Hasidism, taking the conversation I begin here to new vistas.

The Universe of the Discourse of Ḥabad

“A distinguishing feature of Hasidism,” says Naftali Loewenthal, “is the ‘teaching’ delivered by the Hasidic leader.”

The reason for this attention is the implicit claim that the Hasidic Torah differed totally from the rational and scholarly discussion of the halakhist and also from the emotional and dramatic sermon of the preacher. Instead it was considered to be of revelatory power, emanating and drawn from an upper realm. (Loewenthal, 64)

Loewenthal’s succinct characterization of what is distinctive about the Hasidic teaching underscores the imperativeness of a comprehensive and thorough-going understanding of the workings of the Hasidic discourse in both content and form in order to arrive at a nuanced perspective on any given phenomenon of Hasidic society. The notion of the Hasidic discourse as a revelation informs our understanding not only of the texts and ideologies of Hasidism, but also of the masters who deliver these teachings who serve as the conduits for this revelation, the adherents who attend their oration and who subsequently preserve and study them, and the meaning of the event of the encounter of Hasid and their rebbe.

Loewenthal notes that this definition is borne out by one of the earliest recorded descriptions of the setting of the delivery of a “Hasidic Torah,” that found in the memoir of Solomon Maimon depicting a sermon by R. Dov Ber, Maggid of Mezeritch (d. 1772). In a similar vein, the characterization holds true for the teaching of all Hasidic leaders, *mutatis mutandis*. Nevertheless, within the circles of Ḥabad, the place of the *maymer* (pl. *maymorim*; *ma’amar/im*), the discourse, is perhaps even more central, more fraught with moment, and more formally ritualized than in Hasidism generally. As such, an elaboration on the settings and forms of the Ḥabad teachings is the appropriate entry point into the topic of the rebbehood of the seventh Ḥabad leader, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994).

Chapter 2 – The Universe of the Discourse of Ḥabad

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The Unfolding of the Ḥabad Tradition

The Hasidic movement grew up in eighteenth century Eastern Europe, where it soon became a dominant force in Jewish life of those regions. By the year 1800 Hasidic centers could be found in numerous towns throughout Ukraine, Galicia, Poland, White Russia, and Lithuania, in addition to many satellite communities and a modest Hasidic settlement in the Galilee in Palestine.⁴¹ While Hasidism had its adherents as well as its detractors, its ethos and place within Eastern European Jewish life had become impossible to ignore.

The origins of the movement are traced to R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov (the Besht, c1700-1760) of Mezhibuzh (Medzhybizh), in the Podolia region of southern Ukraine. While in recent decades his traditionally-held status as the movement’s founder has been called into question,⁴² there is no doubt that his persona and the teachings attributed to him served as a source of profound inspiration for the Hasidic masses and especially for the Hasidic leaders. Whereas historically Hasidism was the term for Jewish pietism and asceticism, the Besht’s taught a mysticism that emphasized joy, love, and a more tolerant attitude toward the body in the service of the Divine.⁴³

The aforementioned R. Dov Ber, the Maggid (preacher) of Mezeritch (Mezhyrichi, modern Ukraine) (c1704-1772), one of the Besht’s foremost disciples, became mentor to many of the Hasidic masters of the next generation after the latter’s passing. The accomplished scholars that made up the Maggid’s inner circle were “charismatic figures... pneumatic men of spirit.”⁴⁴ In the center at Mezeritch they imbibed the Maggid’s distinctive mystical thought which would become the impetus for his disciples’ styles of communal leadership during the

⁴¹ See Marcin Wodzinski and Waldemar Spallek, *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 44-45; Simon Dubnow, “The Maggid of Miedzyrzecz, His Associates, and the Center in Volhynia (1760-1772),” in Gershon David Hundert, *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 63 ff; Biale et al, *Hasidism*, 103 ff.

⁴² Biale, *Hasidism*, 43 ff; Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba’al Shem Tov* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴³ See Biale et al, *Hasidism*, 54 ff.

⁴⁴ Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 28.

final quarter of the eighteenth century. One central theme transmitted by R. Dov Ber is the aspiration towards *biṭṭul* (self-abnegation): “In the teachings of... R. Dov Ber, the emphasis is... on the annihilation of the self... The teachings of the Maggid constitute the most intense expression in Judaism of the quest for... self-dissolution in the Divine.”⁴⁵

The Maggid’s doctrine of *biṭṭul* came to form a cornerstone in the thinking of his disciple, R. Schneur Zalman of Lyady, White Russia (c1745-1812), also called the *Alter rebbe* (Old Rebbe), founder of the tributary of Hasidism called Ḥabad. The latter’s foundational work, known as *Tanya*, viewed *biṭṭul* as the principium that animated the entire complex of the worldview expressed therein, underpinning the attainment of love of the Divine, faith and joy, and constituting the explanatory principle illuminating the significance of creation and the Divine-human relationship.⁴⁶

The *Alter rebbe* became the founder a dynasty that extended for seven generations, the “golden chain” of Ḥabad, each successive rebbe further developing and expounding on the teachings found in the *Tanya* and in R. Schneur Zalman’s oral discourses.⁴⁷ Under R. Schneur Zalman’s leadership, Ḥabad became the dominant Hasidic group in White Russia, and it maintained this status for the duration of its existence in that land, over a century. His eldest son R. Dov Ber (the *Mitteler rebbe* (Middle Rebbe), 1773-1828), succeeded him upon his passing, moving the Ḥabad capitol to the town of Lubavitch (Lyubavichi, Russia). R. Dov Ber was succeeded by his son-in-law, who was also R. Schneur Zalman’s grandson, R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (called the *Tsemakh tsedek* after the title of his work of responsa; 1789-1866). Although the latter had several sons who became rebbes in their own right, it was his youngest, R. Shmuel Schneersohn (Maharash (acronym for *morenu ha-rav shemuel*, our teacher, Rabbi Samuel), 1834-1882) who occupied the seat in Lubavitch. The *Tsemakh tsedek*’s eldest son, R. Borukh Sholem, who never occupied a position as rebbe, was the ancestor of the seventh rebbe.

R. Shmuel’s son, R. Sholem Dovber Schneersohn (Rashab, also known as the Rebbe, *nishmosoy eyden* (may his soul reside in Eden), 1860-1920) was the last Ḥabad rebbe to preside in Lubavitch, the upheavals of the first World War spurring the relocation of the fifth rebbe and his court to Rostov-on-Don, and with him the heart of the Ḥabad world.⁴⁸ From there “Lubavitch was exiled ten times,”⁴⁹ as Rashab’s son and successor, R. Yosef Yitskhok Schneersohn (Rayyats (also the *Friyerdiker rebbe* (previous rebbe)), 1880-1950) wandered from Rostov to Leningrad to Latvia, Poland, and finally to Brooklyn, New York in 1940. During the last decade of his life, Rayyats sowed the seeds of the American incarnation of Ḥabad Hasidism. With Rayyats’s passing in 1950 and the ascent of his second son-in-law and distant cousin, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe, 1902-1994), to the leadership of Ḥabad as its seventh rebbe, American Ḥabad became a prominent and at times controversial force in post-

⁴⁵ Ibid, 31.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 54-63.

⁴⁷ See Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 168-69, on various methods of reading Ḥabad texts, and his arguments for choosing the model of an ideological circle, rather than that of individual units.

⁴⁸ See Wodzinski, *Historical Atlas*, 153 ff. regarding the seismic shift effected by the first World War on the Hasidic world in general.

⁴⁹ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sefer ha-sihot – 5752* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1993), 2:471.

Holocaust Jewish life, both in the United States and abroad, especially with the expansion of its outreach efforts towards all sectors of the Jewish community.

The prominence of Ḥabad Hasidism as an activist force in recent times, and particularly its tantalizing messianic impulse, has tended to obscure its intellectual and analytical ethos that lie at the root of its *Weltanschauung*.⁵⁰ While it is generally recognized that Ḥabad is an acronym for *ḥokhmah, binah, da'at* (wisdom, understanding, knowledge), and that R. Schneur Zalman preached a Hasidism that placed priority on intellectual contemplation, the scope of intellectual output by the Ḥabad masters and the centrality of the text in Ḥabad society throughout the entirety of its peregrinations, up to and including our own time, has received insufficient attention. Ḥabad Hasidism is arguably the most prolific Hasidic branch, each rebbe producing a high volume of manuscripts and publications, in addition to transcripts of their oral addresses set down by others. Once on American soil, Rayyats set up an official Ḥabad publishing arm, Kehot Publication Society, which set about making much of the trove of manuscripts available in book form; today, Kehot's booklist could constitute a library of its own, with many texts still to be published as yet.⁵¹

The Maymer

The dominant format used by the Ḥabad rebbes for promulgating their thought, comprising both oral and written elements, was the *ma'amar* or *derush* (discourse).⁵² While there were other methods that the rebbes used to convey teachings to their adherents, including books, treatises, epistles, and so forth, the *maymer* was the vehicle utilized most regularly and consistently throughout the tenure of each and every rebbe. It is imperative to appreciate not only the form and content of the discourses in both their oral and written instantiations, but also their significance as artifacts within Ḥabad culture.

The primacy and significance of the discourse, also known as *divrey elokim khayim* (*divre e-lohim ḥayyim*, words of the Living G-d⁵³), or by its acronym *dakh*, is understandable on account of its “revelatory” nature mentioned at the outset. For the Hasidic leader, “it is the *Shekhinah* (divine presence) ... which speaks through the mouth of the *Zaddik* (saintly Hasidic leader).”⁵⁴ Hasidic thought conceives of “the formal teachings of the *Zaddik* [as] drawn from an upper realm. The discourse was considered as a channel of communication by means of which some aspect of a spiritual world... could be made available to his followers.”⁵⁵ Thus the circumstance of the *maymer*'s oral public delivery was itself auspicious, even when the attendee could not understand or even hear what was being said.

⁵⁰ See my discussion in Introduction??.

⁵¹ See Hotsa'at Sefarim Qehat, *Hotsa'at sefarim Qehat* (Kfar Chabad: Kehot Publication Society, 2013), 39 ff.

⁵² Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 68, differentiates somewhat between the terms *ma'amar* and *derush*, overstating his case in my opinion. The two terms are synonymous for all intents and purposes.

⁵³ See Jeremiah 23:36; b*Yoma*, 35b. See Ch Language, “The Voice of Authority,” for more on this term.

⁵⁴ Additional discussion of this phrase will come below, [Ch Intertextuality, refer to Language for comments].

⁵⁵ Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 65.

The Sabbath was an ideal time for the delivery of a discourse, often on the eve of the Sabbath, although other moments could occasion a *maymer* as well, such as a holiday or a family celebration.⁵⁶ (For the Rebbe, uniquely, the primary setting for reciting a discourse was as part of a *farbrengen* (Hasidic gathering), which he held on some but not all Sabbaths, as well as on special weekday occasions; more on this below.) The discourse was often preceded by the singing of a contemplative Ḥabad melody, and delivered in a unique singsong, while the audience stood in reverence.⁵⁷ These traditions served to heighten the sense of revelation embodied in the discourse.

Later, after the discourse was concluded, groups of Hasidim would review its contents, usually led by a *khoyzer* (*hozer*, reviewer; pl. *khoyzrim* (*hozerim*)) who had been able to commit the *maymer* to memory as he listened. At the next opportunity, the discourse would be transcribed and copied by *manikhim* (*manihim*, transcribers), people capable of producing a suitable transcript (*hanokhe* (*hanaḥah*)) to be disseminated among the Hasidim.⁵⁸ Depending on the technology of the era, this transcript might be handwritten, typewritten and mimeographed (in the twentieth century), printed, or produced by computer. As a written or printed entity, the discourse was a commodity for which people would pay; the physical text then served to facilitate continued study and meditation upon its contents. The ongoing study and review of a rebbe's discourses provided material for contemplation in the context of the regular prayers.

An important setting for engagement with the discourse in Ḥabad life is the public oral recapitulation of the discourse from memory on a wide array of occasions. Customarily a *maymer* is reviewed, a practice called *khazer'n khassides* (reviewing a Hasidic teaching), during the late afternoon of the Sabbath at the time of the Third Meal (*se'udah shelishit*), at the celebration of a personal joyous occasion such as a circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, wedding, etc., or at any time that one might feel it spiritually necessary to review *khassides* from memory to themselves. This practice of review underscores that, while it may have been transcribed or even published in book form, the discourse always retains its essentially oral status, its being set down on paper serving as a prompt for its continued oral life.⁵⁹

Loewenthal noted that the Hasidic teaching is unlike some of the more familiar traditional forms of rabbinic exposition such as the scholarly Talmudic discourse (*pilpul*) or the sermon (*derashah*) of the preacher (*maggid*).⁶⁰ This is true not only of the assumptions made

⁵⁶ See Loewenthal, *ibid*; Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 138-39.

⁵⁷ See Loewenthal, *ibid*.

⁵⁸ For details on the dissemination of manuscripts among Ḥabad Hasidim, see e.g. Israel Sandman, "Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Rashal and Chabad Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library" (video of lecture at Oxford University Chabad Society), accessed November 25, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/4034445/jewish/Rabbi-Chaim-Yaakov-Rashal-Chabad-Manuscripts-in-the-John-Rylands-Library.htm. *Ibid*, "Chabad's 19th Century Manuscript Boom," accessed December 14, 2021, https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/3949906/jewish/Chabads-19th-Century-Manuscript-Boom.htm.

⁵⁹ Yitschak Meir Kagan, trans., *Hayom Yom: From Day to Day* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1988), 28, 74, 81, et passim. Shalom Dovber Levine, *Toledot Habad be-Polin, Lita, ve-Latviya – 1790-1946* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2011) passim regarding Rayyats's efforts to promote the practice of reviewing *khassides* in many places.

⁶⁰ For a thorough discussion of the method of *pilpul*, see Daniel Boyarin, "'Pilpul': The Logic of Commentary," in *The Talmud – A Personal Take: Selected Essays*, ed. Tal Hever-Chybowski (Tubingen: Mohr

about the sources of the respective teachings' inspiration, but also of the formal aspects of the various genres. The subject matter of the Talmudic *pilpul* and its method of hair-splitting analysis is not primarily what is found in the *maymer*; the Ḥabad discourse focuses on Kabbalistic and pietistic (*mussar*) content, discussing *halakhah* (law) only occasionally and tangentially. The *maymer* may utilize an analytical approach to its own subject matter, but it is not primarily centered on making its argument compelling; rather, it seeks to make its point as clearly as possible, using proof-texts and references to clarify its exposition.

The *maymer* differs from the maggidic *derashah* as well. The *derashah* in its finest form was an oratorical masterpiece full of pathos, designed to stir the hearts of the audience. The preacher shaped his oration in response to his audience, whether anticipatorily or in real time. He had to convince them of his credentials to speak, hold their interest during his talk, address their challenges perceived and actual, and walk the fine line between inspiring his audience to better themselves and giving them cause to take offense.⁶¹ While a rebbe certainly considered his audience when preparing his discourse and tailored it somewhat to their capacity,⁶² the event of delivering the discourse was momentous in its own right, and its oratory aspects were muted. Rather than attempting to impress the hearers with rhetorical flourishes or dramatic gestures, the discourse was delivered in more of a monotone and in a state of personal withdrawal inward; its persuasive ability lie mainly in its being perceived as a transmission from a higher, esoteric realm.⁶³

The *maymer* begins with a *dibur hamaskhil* (*dibbur ha-maḥil*, the “title”), which predominately consists of a biblical verse; at times it might be a statement of Talmud or Midrash, and less often simply “to understand the concept of such-and-so.” The initial verse with which the discourse opens, along with the year in which it was delivered, serves as a handle, so that it will be referred to as “*maymer* X,” or as “(*maymer*) *dibur hamaskhil* X,” of such-and-such year. Thus a discourse beginning with the verse ‘Arm (*heḥalzu*) from among you men for the army’ (Num. 31:3), recited in the year 5659 (1898) is known as “(*maymer*) *dibur hamaskhil heykholtsu* - 5659.”

The term *dibbur ha-maḥil*, sometimes rendered as “s.v.” or “*sub verbo*,” literally means a headword, and is traditionally used to indicate the lemma for a comment of one of the medieval commentaries, such as Rashi. The commentary is an interpolation for the purposes of greater clarification within a primary text that is the subject of study. As the text may pose certain difficulties, Rashi’s (or another commentator’s) comment serves to elucidate it, so that the passage will be understood. A passage of Biblical text, e.g., that is being studied will comprise the lemma, and Rashi’s comment will illuminate it. The *dibur hamaskhil* of the discourse, however, works in quite the opposite way. Sometimes referred to as the “passport”,⁶⁴ the opening passage is often quite secondary to the main content of the discourse. The discourse’s title is often associated with the time of year or the occasion of its delivery but may have little to do

Siebeck, 2017), 47-66. For a comprehensive discussion of the *derashah*, see Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁶¹ Saperstein, *ibid*, 44 ff.

⁶² See e.g. Loewenthal, *ibid*, 74; Yosef Yitshaq Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-sihot – 5705*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1986), 18-19.

⁶³ Loewenthal, *ibid*, 65.

⁶⁴ Mikha’el Hanokh Golomb, ed., *Sha’are limmud ha-’ussidut*, revised edition (Brooklyn: Vaad L’hafotzos Sichos, 1998), 43 (and ff. for the structure of a *maymer*).

with the actual subsequent discussion. The body of the discourse is less a commentary on the text than the text is a jumping-off point to expound the subtleties of a given issue in Ḥabad thought. This is particularly evident from the fact that there are *maymorim* that were written without beginnings and endings, and these were only added later.⁶⁵ The series of discourses called *Bosi legani* (*ba'ti le-ganni*) to be discussed here likewise displays this phenomenon.⁶⁶ It should also be noted that at times, discourses with identical or similar content will begin with different passages, and vice versa.⁶⁷

Although the style of the Ḥabad discourse was differentiated above from that of the *pilpul* or the sermon, it does retain certain conventions of these older genres, at least superficially. Like the sermon, it opens with a Biblical verse, as we have discussed.⁶⁸ The initial passage serving as the *dibur hamashkil* usually prompts several questions, in the analytical style typical of both *pilpul* and sermon. The discourse's topic is presented ostensibly as a basis for answering these initial questions, although the loose ends are not always tied up, and even when they are, the connection is tenuous often enough.⁶⁹ The discussion that comprises the bulk of the discourse is dialectical and discursive in style, somewhere between the *pilpul* and the sermon.⁷⁰ The *maymer* constructs an argument that adheres to its own internal logic, but is not disputatious in the way that *pilpul* is. It is likewise not pathos-centered as is the sermon. Rather, as noted above, the discourse constructs an intellectual elaboration of a topic, utilizing proof-texts from the Bible and rabbinic literature, as well as analogies from the human psyche and the natural world. As Loewenthal characterizes the discourse, they are “lengthy and subtle constructs, rather like complex philosophical-kabbalistic Midrashim.”⁷¹

The topics of the Ḥabad discourses typically center on themes drawn from the Kabbalistic literature, especially (in the successive generations) as they are refracted through the prisms of earlier Ḥabad masters. Often the theme is employed to provide interpretation of a portion of the liturgical prayers, to serve as material for contemplation on the “greatness of G-d” during prayer,⁷² or the discourse might elaborate a topic of pietism in the Ḥabad understanding by recourse to Kabbalistic notions. The discussion may be presented as an elucidation of a Midrashic passage (which may or may not be related to the *dibur hamashkil*) whose inner, Kabbalistic significance is disclosed by the *maymer*.⁷³ As a channel by which the “upper realms” are accessed, the Kabbalistic aspect of the discourse is understandably indispensable.

⁶⁵ E.g. the *hemshekh* of *Be-sha'ah she-hiqdimu – 5672*; see the bibliographical overview in Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-sha'ah she-hiqdimu – 5672*, 4th ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2001), 4 (second pagination). See also second sub-footnote in Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, iii.

⁶⁶ See Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni* *ibid*, fn2; below [Ch Intertextuality, effacement of boundaries].

⁶⁷ Roth's assertion (*Ketsad liqro*, 189) that a discourse's content is contextualized by other discourses with the same *dibbur ha-mathil* is thus belied. For discourses of previous rebbes which the Rebbe recited with his own opening and concluding paragraphs, see e.g., Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – meluqat*, (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1993), 1:51 ff (and see note *ṣarikh le-havin*); *ibid*, 483 ff.

⁶⁸ See Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, 63 ff.

⁶⁹ This is especially the case for the *ma'amarim* where the beginnings and conclusions were added at a later stage.

⁷⁰ Roth (*ibid*, 102) nuances the differentiation made by Eliezer Schweid between the *ma'amar*, which Schweid describes as “scholarly,” and the *siḥah* (discussed below), described as “narrative” and “folk”; see there.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 71-2.

⁷² Cf. *Shulḥan arukh, oraḥ ḥayyim*, 98:1. See Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 75.

⁷³ Cf. Saperstein, *ibid*, 67, regarding the *ma'amar* in the traditional sermon.

The Hemshekh

Thus far we have discussed the individual *maymer*. A sub-genre of the Ḥabad discourse is the *hemshekh* (pl. *hemsheykhim* (*hemshekhim*)), the serial discourse to which we alluded above.⁷⁴ Unlike the regular discourse, which is a self-contained unit, the *hemshekh* will continue the topic of discussion over the course of a number of discourses.⁷⁵ If the standard practice was for a rebbe to deliver the *maymer* on the eve of the Sabbath, for example, the *hemshekh* might extend over several Sabbaths. Some *hemsheykhim* are relatively short, such as *Bosi legani* is (consisting of four discourses), while others are much lengthier, sometimes extending over a year or more. An individual discourse typically opens with a verse related to the lection read from the Torah that week or related to a holiday or other significant date around the time of its delivery, and its content at least nominally unfolds from that opening theme. The *hemshekh*, however, is focused on its area of interest, while the opening verse is almost an afterthought; indeed, as mentioned above, at times the opening and closing lines of the discourses are appended at a remove from the preparation of the body of the discourse.

The *hemshekh* is a format that gives the rebbe the space to fully elaborate an idea without having to confine himself to the hour or so over which he can expect to hold his audience's attention and allow the *khoyzrim* to retain the content.⁷⁶ The use of the style of the *hemshekh*, began primarily with the fourth rebbe, Maharash, a style that, in the words of R. Menachem Mendel, is "not bound by orderliness," i.e. freeing the rebbe from the more restrictive conventions of the unitary *maymer*.⁷⁷ Roth (*ibid*) observes that the concept of distributing a single discussion over multiple discourses existed in the earlier generations of Ḥabad as well; despite this, they do not quite constitute a *hemshekh*.

There are several distinctions that can be drawn between earlier complexes of discourses and the *hemshekh*, although we should be careful not to distinguish too sharply; some of the following characteristics, present in the discourses of earlier generations, can be ascribed in some form to categorical *hemsheykhim* as well. In their written form several related discourses may be presented as a single discourse; this lends credence to the idea that we are dealing with essentially a single *maymer* which was delivered piecemeal on several occasions.⁷⁸ There are also related discourses that were orated on various non-sequential occasions, which taken together can be seen as associated with one another, treating a single topic comprehensively. Thus the Rebbe observes that

in that *Alter rebbe's khassides* (*hassidut*; Ḥabad Hasidic teachings)... we find discourses that may explicate with additional elaboration the topic discussed in a previous discourse; [these] discourses begin with [phrases such as] 'To understand with additional

⁷⁴ See Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Hitva'aduyot – 5750*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn: Lahak Hanachos, 1990), 113 ff. Roth, *How to Read*, 94 ff.

⁷⁵ See an overview of the *hemshekh* genre by the Rebbe in Shmuel Schneersohn, *Liqutei Torah Torat Shemu'el – 5631*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2005), 389; cited in Roth, *How to Read*, 95.

⁷⁶ See Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sefer ha-toledot Admor Maharash*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1997) 24, fn3.

⁷⁷ Schneerson, *Hitva'aduyot*, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ *Bosi legani – 5737*, discussed herein, can be an example (though not the best) of this; see below, Ch Intertextuality insert, "R. Menachem Mendel, 5737 (1977)."

clarification,’ ‘To understand the roots of these matters’ etc.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, we do not find a complete *hemshekh* consisting of multiple discourses. After thorough study and profound consideration etc., one might find a connection between several discourses (such that it is conceivable to call them a *hemshekh*); nevertheless, what is overtly and obviously perceived are solitary discourses...⁸⁰

The *hemshekh*, in contrast, typically (but not exclusively) consists of multiple discourses, each with their own beginning and end, that nevertheless constitute a chain of discussions that build on each other progressively. As noted, at times it is evident that the *hemshekh* was initially prepared as one unit, and was only later divided into individual discourses; still, often even in its published form it is presented as separate discourses, and certainly its original oral delivery was so.⁸¹ The discourses of a *hemshekh* are also typically delivered in succession to each other, rather than being scattered chronologically over a given rebbe’s oeuvre; nevertheless, this does not negate the possibility that an individual discourse not related to the *hemshekh* might be recited during the period of the series’ oral presentation.⁸² On a the level of content, the *hemshekh* can be distinguished from other complexes of discourses by analogy to the difference between a chain and a jigsaw puzzle. A single discourse recited over several occasions might simply be a discussion that requires a lengthier time than the format of a single recitation is able to exhaust. The *hemshekh* can flow from topic to topic, each one building on the previous ones, and conceivably with a unified insight providing the bedrock for all of them. It can constitute an exploration of topics at the length the respective rebbe wishes to devote to them, developing and refining his thinking on these matters from multiple angles.

In the context of our present discussion, the discourses of *Bosi legani* are correctly described as a *hemshekh*. The specifics of its format and chronology will be detailed below; for now suffice it to remark that it consists of several sub-genres of the *hemshekh*. There is the standard *hemshekh* of four related discourses promulgated in succession; there is also the elaboration of that *hemshekh* annually on a set date which can also be seen as a kind of *hemshekh*; finally, there are on several occasions mini-*hemsheykhim* within the annual elaborations. We will also develop the idea that the format of this *hemshekh* serves as a textual thematization of the progression and succession of the seven generations of Ḥabad leadership, thus *hemshekh* in the sense of continuity.

Promulgation of Heritage

Above, we touched on several objectives for the promulgation of the discourse, namely to deepen the prayer experience and to mediate the divine world. It is important to remark on a couple of broader objectives that influence the content of the discourses, relating to the Ḥabad understanding of the significance of the Hasidic tradition. These are the “dissemination of the

⁷⁹ Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 74, gives some background on these explanatory discourses (*bi’urim*).

⁸⁰ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Hitva’aduyot – 5746*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn: Lakak Hanachos Inc., 1990), 164; cited in Roth, *ibid*, 96.

⁸¹ See Schneersohn, *Torat Shemu’el*, *ibid*, esp. the second marginal note.

⁸² E.g., the *maymer* “*Heḥaletsu – 5659*”; see Sholom Dovber Schneerson, *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5659* 4th ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1991), v.

wellsprings outward,” and more specifically the re-presentation of the teachings of the earlier rebbes of the Ḥabad line.

According to the well-known letter by the Besht addressed to his brother-in-law R. Gershon of Kitov (Kuty), the messiah would come when “[the Besht’s] wellsprings would be disseminated outward (*lekeshe-yaphuzu ma’ayanotekha ḥuzah*),” meaning when his teaching would become widely known.⁸³ This vision forms a foremost impetus for the recitation and publication of what is termed *khassides*, the “Hasidism” of Ḥabad, by the rebbes and their adherents. R. Schneur Zalman of Lyady’s teachings consisted of the elaboration of ideas and themes taught by the Besht, as they had come down to him through the teachings of the Maggid and R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk (Viciebsk, Belarus, d. 1788), in his unique Ḥabadian method.⁸⁴ His discourses were transcribed by a small circle of authorized transcribers that included his son and successor R. Dov Ber and his grandson R. Menakhem Mendel, who took up the leadership of Ḥabad in the third generation. Additionally, a significant portion of the writings and oral discourses of the latter consist of reprises of those of R. Schneur Zalman, with additional elaboration (especially by R. Dov Ber) and annotation (especially by R. Menakhem Mendel). It is thus evident from the output of the second and third rebbes that a major part of their enterprise was the promulgation of the teachings of R. Schneur Zalman; this was true to such an extent that some Hasidim criticized the *Mitteler rebbe* as not being able to reveal new teachings.⁸⁵

In subsequent generations, we find discourses that are “founded (*meyusad*)” on those of the predecessors. At times the later *maymer* may be an almost verbatim repetition of the foundational discourse⁸⁶; in other instances, the presentation of the *maymer* is different, but it will recapitulate the same themes and arguments broached in the originary discourse(s). In the Rebbe’s work, a signature form of “founding” upon an earlier discourse is one that is closest to a kind of commentary, in which the earlier discourse will be identified, analyzed, and expanded upon, akin to the kinds of commentaries the Tosaphists contribute to the Talmud (this phenomenon will be analyzed more closely below in our discussion of *Bosi legani*). It is noteworthy that even a discourse that is not evidently based on an earlier one nevertheless largely constitutes an elaboration of themes introduced into the Ḥabad universe of discourse by earlier rebbes.

In summary, the overall enterprise of the Ḥabad discourse is one of promulgating the conceptions and patterns of thought that are understood to be the “wellsprings” of the Besht and the ongoing instantiation of the revelation of the realm of the sacred performed by the previous rebbes of Ḥabad. It consists of the reiteration of traditional Ḥabad teachings that may be expanded on, drawing on the Kabbalah (especially Lurianic teaching), and packaged as an ostensible expatiation on a timely biblical verse or rabbinic passage. Its thrust is an exhortation to piety, and especially to a contemplative performance of the daily prayer rites. It forms the central catalyzer for the other elements of Ḥabad, embodying the bond between rebbe and Hasidim,

⁸³ This letter is discussed at length by Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 97 ff.; Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 13 ff.

⁸⁴ On sources of teachings, see Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 39-40; introduction to *Tanya*, Nissan Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” in Kehot Publication Society, *Likkutei Amarim – Tanya*, by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, bilingual and revised ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2014), xxvi.

⁸⁵ Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 104.

⁸⁶ See Ch. Intertextuality “Effacement of boundaries.”

stimulating the Habad ethos of Hasidic study, social gathering (*farbrengen*), and unhurried prayer, and defining the priorities and values of the Habad member.

Transmitting the Discourse

Let us return to the occasion of the discourse's delivery, which bears describing in some detail. Israel Jacobson, a former student of the “*Tomkhey temimim*” yeshivah established by Rashab in the town of Lubavitch recalls his first experience of a *maymer*:

I believe it was after the Sabbath eve prayers had taken place in the synagogue.⁸⁷ The Rebbe (Rashab) entered the “Small Hall (*kleyner zahl*)”... He would deliver the discourse in the southeast corner [of the room]. A closed square was made around his seat (the eastern and southern sides being the walls of the study hall, on the western side pews were brought over, and on the northern side they put a table).

It was not a large space, extending almost up to the lectern which stood quite close to the Holy Ark (*oren hakoydesh (aron ha-qodesh)*), which stood in the middle of the southern side of the synagogue.⁸⁸

Rayyats had come to the study hall earlier, dressed in his Sabbath clothes and a *shtraymel* (Hasidic fur hat). The students sang *niggunim* (wordless Hasidic melodies)... Suddenly it became utterly silent, and a wide path was cleared. The Rebbe entered and recited the discourse... After concluding the discourse, [Rashab] entered a side room (*kheyder sheyni (heder sheni*⁸⁹) to rest.⁹⁰

This recollection highlights the atmosphere of anticipation that preceded the rebbe's appearance and his peroration. Another alumnus of Lubavitch describes the “great hubbub [as] each one strove to secure a place to stand during the Rebbe's delivery of the discourse. Every individual was focused inward so as to properly absorb the Rebbe's words, such that he would know them verbatim”.⁹¹ The enclosure in which Rashab sat suggests the press of a crowd, apparently made up primarily of students and people associated with the yeshivah, although presumably other

⁸⁷ Chitrik, in Yehudah Chitrik, *Reshimot devarim* (Chitrik family, 2009), 342, remembers the time of the *maymer* as being on Friday after the afternoon prayer (*minkhe*). There are several other discrepancies between his account and Jacobson's, which can be attributed to 1) the fact that these accounts were written decades after the events they describe, and so are not as accurate as they might have been; 2) they arrived in Lubavitch about five years apart, and the routines may have shifted somewhat in the interim; 3) certain aspects may not have had a fixed routine, but varied from occasion to occasion.

⁸⁸ It was on this side, facing north, that Rashab sat while discoursing.

⁸⁹ This term designates a room adjacent to the main synagogue, which was standard in Habad Hasidic synagogues to be used by those that wished to practice extensive contemplative prayer according to the Habad tradition. See Shalom Dovber Levine, *Lyubavitsh: Toledot ha-ayarah be-meshekh ha-dorot bi-ikufat heyotah merkaz tenu'at Habad ha-olamit be-meshekh 102 shanim; 1813-1915* (Agudat haside Habad be-medinat Hever Ha-amim, 2001), 11, for a diagram of the *khotser* (Rebbe's courtyard) including the *kleyner zahl*; Wodzinski, *Historical Atlas*, 94.

⁹⁰ Israel Jacobson, *Zikaron li-vne yisra'el: Memoirs of Rabbi Israel Jacobson, 1907-1939*, ed. Shalom Dovber Levine (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1996), 12.

⁹¹ Chitrik, *ibid.*

locals listened to the discourse as well (see below).⁹² Having begun the sacred timeframe of the Sabbath, there must have already been a sense of spiritual elevation; the presence of the distinguished personage of Rayyats, Rashab's only son and the administrator of the yeshivah, who would stand directly across from his father as the *maymer* was recited, would have lent an additional aspect of momentousness to the occasion. The atmosphere was further heightened by the soul-stirring singing, "tunes... from the depths of the heart... persisting... at times for a half hour, an hour, or more", followed by the sudden silence at the moment of the rebbe's entrance. The mental and physical energy expended in the delivery itself, which was performed without recourse to notes, is evident from Rashab's subsequent need to regain his composure. "The rebbe would exit to the side room [where he had left his overcoat and scarf] and remain there for five or more minutes, to rest and cool down".⁹³ The event made a powerful impression upon Jacobson, who refers to it as "a wondrous sight."⁹⁴

Chitrik summarizes the experience of attending the rebbe's discourse:

This wondrous sight – the Ḥabad melodies tugging at the heartstrings and stirring the soul; the Rebbe's discourse of *khassides* [uttered] in a "voice cleaving with flames of fire,"⁹⁵ the silent stillness, the devotion [with which the audience] listened, [taking care] not to miss a single word of the *maymer* – created the sense that one was standing at Mt. Sinai, six hundred thousand Israelites standing on all sides to hear G-d's word. So did the Rebbe sit in the middle, enclosed by tables, and around the tables stood the Hasidim and the *temimim* (students of *Tomkhey temimim*), listening to every word and utterance with bated breath; the singing was like hearing the thundering and lightning, and the Rebbe's utterances are the word of G-d. All of the above served to elevate the soul, as if one were in a higher world beyond this physical one.⁹⁶

This admittedly hyperbolic description of the moment of the discourse's delivery underscores the perception of its significance and centrality in the life of the Ḥabad adherent, as one that shapes and influences their religious life as a whole and one that informs their identity as a Hasid. A related anecdote is recorded by Jacobson, in which the priority placed on hearing the rebbe's words is emphasized.

On this occasion Rashab recited the discourse at his home (which was in the same complex as the Small Hall). Having gone to eat something quickly before the discourse began, the author and his friends return to find themselves locked out of the house, as the rebbe had already begun speaking. Although it was a wintry evening, they were able to hear the discourse through the closed window, "for [Rashab] would say *khassides* in a loud voice."⁹⁷ The group remained standing in the great cold and the snow, and listened to the rest of the discourse. "Later, at about 11:00 pm, having reviewed the discourse, we sat near the winter stove in the 'Great Hall (*groyser zahl*)' and conversed... This had been a lesson for us. How was it that we went off to

⁹² See also the description of the *farbrengen* of 19 Kislev in Jacobson, *ibid*, 37. Chitrik, *ibid*, refers to "the Hasidim and the students [of the yeshivah]."

⁹³ Chitrik, *ibid*.

⁹⁴ Chitrik, cited below, uses an almost identical expression.

⁹⁵ Cf. Psalms 29:7.

⁹⁶ Chitrik, *ibid*, 343

⁹⁷ Chitrik, *ibid*, 342, describes Rashab's voice as a "powerful baritone," which could be heard even by those standing at a distance. "In the summer, when the windows were open, even those standing outside could hear the *maymer* clearly."

eat before *khassides?!'*"⁹⁸ Despite having fasted all that day, the young men berated themselves for not having prioritized attending the discourse.

The review of the discourse, known as *khazore* (*ḥazarah*), consists of its own ceremonies and conventions. In the preceding anecdote the author refers to having reviewed the discourse with his fellows until 11:00 pm, which, assuming the discourse began shortly after nightfall, perhaps at about 5:00 pm, meant they had spent several hours at the review. Chitrik asserts that after Rashab's having left the hall,

The [upperclassmen] and some of the guests would surround the [yeshivah's academic] supervisor and Hasidic instructor (*mashpi'a*) Rabbi Shilem Kuratin, who reviewed the discourse, faithfully hewing to the Rebbe's phraseology. Many of the elder students assisted him in maintaining the correct order of the topics as well as the precise wording of the Rebbe. After this *khazore*, many of the students sat in groups and reviewed the *maymer*... After the Sabbath, *Reb Shilem* would examine many of them to ensure that they knew the discourse and understood it well.⁹⁹

This *khazore* represented an informal review among the Hasidim; there was, however, an elite cadre of *khoyzrim* who were officially tasked with precisely recapitulating the *khassides* to the wider public. The circle of reviewers consisted of some of the elder yeshivah students mentioned above; entry into this circle was predicated on an ability to grasp the content of what had been said and an aptitude for remembering the words and order of the discussion. Jacobson describes his own acceptance into the capacity of *khoyzer*¹⁰⁰:

The routine in Lubavitch with the late Rebbe was that on each Sabbath or holiday that he would deliver *divrey eloykim khayim* (the discourse would be said at the time of the prayers of Sabbath eve), the *khoyzrim* would enter on the Sabbath morning before the [morning] prayers (at approximately 8:00 am) to review the discourse in the Rebbe's presence. He would correct the wording and would also add some explanations.

Usually they would gather each Sabbath in the room where one waited to enter for *yekhides* (*yehidut*, private audience with the rebbe), and would wait until the Rebbe would open the door... For *khazore*, several students who could review the *maymer* entered, and if there were guests who were knowledgeable in *khassides* or notables [they too would enter] ... His son, Rayyats, when he was in Lubavitch, would enter for the review. The Rebbe would send someone to inform him that the [*khoyzrim*] were entering. He would stand in the hallway, almost behind everyone else... Those waiting would ordinarily lock the door from the inside, so that those wishing to enter not become too numerous.¹⁰¹

Rashab's expense of time on the process of *khazore* underscores the importance he ascribed to the production and preservation of the *maymer*. In some sense the review was a quasi-*maymer* in its own right, involving the presence of Rashab's son and the rebbe's contribution of additional content.¹⁰² The author indicates that Rashab was jealous of his time, asking before each *khazore*

⁹⁸ Jacobson, *ibid*, 39

⁹⁹ Chitrik, *ibid*

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Chitrik, *ibid*.

¹⁰¹ Jacobson, *ibid*, 47

¹⁰² Cf. Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 74, on the *bi'ur*.

whether it was needed, yet he invariably would invest the additional hour or so, evidencing its centrality on the part of the rebbe as well as the disciples.

The *Maymer* in the Seventh Generation

While there were certainly variations on what has been described above, both within the routine of Rashab as well as in the procedures of other rebbes, the basic contours of the above description provide a general outline for the process of the delivery of the Ḥabad discourse. We will examine further on the process for committing the rebbe's words to writing; first, however, we should lay out the unique setting of the discourse as it was presented by the seventh rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel. This setting was the *hitva'adut*, better known by the Yiddish term, *farbrengen*.¹⁰³

Farbrengen

“A public *farbrengen*,” writes Rayyats, “is one of the foundations in the ways of Hasidim and Hasidism. It is an opening and entry-way to the fundamental precept of love of Israel (*ahavas yisroel (ahavat yisra'el)*).” Rayyats is referring to the regular get-togethers conducted by Hasidim, particularly as they are practiced in Ḥabad. The occasion of the *farbrengen* is described thus:

On the main, at the *farbrengen* the principal speakers demand of the participants that they improve their conduct and practices, designate time for the study of *khassides* and keep those times diligently, and that their study be directed to learning and application...
Reproving at a *farbrengen* is only for such matters that will not cause any humiliation whatsoever... One reprove[s] another with love and deep affection.¹⁰⁴

This (admittedly prescriptive) definition of the Hasidic gathering concisely articulates its format and end; noticeably lacking from it is any reference to the participation of a rebbe. In contrast to the *maymer*, which is primarily the purview of the rebbe, the *farbrengen* is the venue in which the Hasidim among themselves attempt to digest and absorb the ethos their rebbes strive to inculcate in them.

In practice, throughout the generations of Ḥabad, the *farbrengen* was most often conducted among the Hasidim themselves, while the rebbes would appear in public to deliver their *maymorim*. Only on a handful of occasions during the course of the year would the rebbe join the Hasidim for a *farbrengen*, on days of particular moment in Ḥabad, such as the holidays of *Simḥat torah*, the 19th of Kislev (commemorating R. Schneur Zalman's release from prison in 1798¹⁰⁵), and Purim.¹⁰⁶ On the occasions of *farbrengen* with the rebbe, he might or might not

¹⁰³ On the terms “*siḥah*” and “*hitva'adut (farbrengen)*,” see Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 101-106.

¹⁰⁴ Kagan, *Hayom Yom*, 98a. Translation with my modifications.

¹⁰⁵ See Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liady: The Origins of Chabad Hasidism*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2015), 151 ff. for more on this event; Loewenthal, *ibid*, 71 ff.

¹⁰⁶ The dates for *farbrengens* of Rashab can be found in Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Torat shalom – sefer ha-siḥot*, 5th ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2003), vii-xiii. These include *Simḥat torah*, 19 Kislev, 24 *Tevet* (commemorating R. Schneur Zalman's passing), and *Purim*, among other dates. Other *siḥot* recorded there and

recite a discourse; even if there was a discourse, it was coincidental, and not inherent to the *farbrengen* format.¹⁰⁷

For the Rebbe, however, the *farbrengen* became a regular opportunity for interaction with the Hasidim, occurring at least twice a month, often more.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the *farbrengen* was the almost exclusive venue for the *maymer*.¹⁰⁹ The Friday night congregating following the evening prayers no longer constituted the anticipated moment, but rather the *farbrengen* that might take place the following afternoon, or just as likely, at an opportune time during the week. In a later chapter we will probe what the reasons for this may have been; at present let us note that the Rebbe often lead *farbrengens* prior to his assuming the Ḥabad leadership. Customarily, he would lead a gathering on the afternoon of the final Sabbath of each month, known as *shabbes mevorkhim* (*shabbat mevarkhim*, the Sabbath on which the new month is blessed).¹¹⁰ As Rayyats's son-in-law, R. Menachem Mendel was periodically invited to lead a *farbrengen* on other occasions as well. Unlike his older brother-in-law, R. Shemaryahu Gourary (Rashag, 1897-1989), who reviewed a Ḥabad discourse each Sabbath at the Third Meal, R. Menachem Mendel never repeated a *maymer* in public prior to his official assumption of the position of rebbe. During the year following Rayyats's passing, when the Rebbe did not yet fill the capacity of rebbe officially, he continued to lead *farbrengens* as he had been wont to do in the preceding years; nevertheless, he neither delivered original discourses, nor did he recapitulate earlier ones. When, on the first anniversary of his father-in-law's passing, R. Menachem Mendel signaled his official acceptance of the role of rebbe by delivering an original discourse, it was done in the course of the *farbrengen* he led in honor of that day.¹¹¹ Subsequently, this became the norm for the Rebbe; the time set for the delivery of a *maymer* was at some point during a *farbrengen*.

At the same time, the event of the *farbrengen* with the Rebbe became a much more regular fixture in Ḥabad life. As mentioned, these occurred much more often than was the case in previous generations, and the *farbrengen* served as a primary vehicle for the Rebbe to broadcast his thinking and teachings. The discourse, while retaining its significance as a heightened and

elsewhere may have been during a public *farbrengen* or in the context of a private conversation. Some of Rayyats's *farbrengens* are recorded in Yosef Yitshaq Schneersohn, *Liqute dibburim*, 6th ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1984). These occur on *Simḥat torah*, 19 *Kislev*, *Purim*, Passover, the conclusion of Passover, *Lag ba-'omer*, *Shavu'ot*, 12 *Tammuz* (celebrating Rayyats's liberation from imprisonment (See Alter B. Metzger, *The Heroic Struggle: The Arrest and Liberation of Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneersohn of Lubavitch in Soviet Russia* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1999), for this event)), and 18 *Elul* (celebrating the birthdays of the Besht and R. Schneur Zalman) among other dates. See also the series of *Sefer ha-siḥot* of Rayyats (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society) for additional occasions. Cf. Jacobson, *ibid*, 263, s.v. *hitva'adut*.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. on 24 *Tevet*, 5657 (1897), Rashab delivered a discourse, and continued to sit at a *farbrengen* with the assembled for some time afterward (Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – 5657*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1998), 308).

¹⁰⁸ For a description of a *farbrengen* with the Rebbe, see Jerome Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 48-50.

¹⁰⁹ One notable exception to this format was the Rebbe's custom of reciting a discourse in the wee hours of *Shavu'ot* morning, known as the *Mattan toyreh* (*torah*) *maymer*, in the years up to 1970; cf. Va'ad hanahot be-Lahaq, *Maft'e'ah ma'amare ve-derushe 5711-5751* (Brooklyn: Lahak Hanochos Inc., 2019), accessed September 7, 2020, <http://www.shturem.net/uploadfile/pdf/TshuraBrook&Motzkin5779.pdf>. On occasion the discourse of 10 *Shevat* would be said on Friday night before or after the evening service; cf Table of Contents in Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*.

¹¹⁰ See Kagan, *Hayom Yom*, 6, re: Ḥabad customs of *shabbes mevorkhim*.

¹¹¹ See Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 65 re: *maymer* as an act of accepting Ḥabad leadership.

revelatory moment during the *farbrengen*, became one of several modes in which a Hasid could “receive” from the Rebbe, through which one might be enlightened, inspired, and motivated to strengthen one’s commitment to the Ḥabad *Lebensanschauung*, as well as providing more regular and longer opportunities for Hasidim to spend time with the Rebbe than previous rebbes had made available to them.

The Rebbe’s *farbrengens* had a format of their own, differing from those of the previous rebbes. Arguably, the most prominent feature of the *farbrengen* was the *sikhe* (pl. *sikhes* (*siḥah/ot*), the “talk.”¹¹² The *sikhes* were on the main analytical, rather than narrative or stream-of-consciousness, as was the norm for previous rebbes. Their subject matter ranged from musings on the significance of the occasion for the *farbrengen* (the date of or the Torah portion read on that Sabbath, the holiday, or the Ḥabad event it commemorated); dissecting a comment of Rashi (R. Shelomo Yiṣḥaḳi, 1040-1105) on a verse of the week’s Torah lection, a passage in the writings of Maimonides, or other classical sources, in pilpulistic style; a foray into a subject treated in the treasury of Ḥabad thought; to addressing pertinent issues in contemporary Jewish life, encouraging involvement in any of the many projects or “campaigns” (*mitvsoyim* (*mitṣa’im*)) which the Rebbe considered pressing, or exhortation to greater alacrity in areas which he perceived as neglected. The *sikhes* were thus the platform via which the Rebbe presented his insights and innovations. Many of these *sikhes* went on to be reworked and edited by the Rebbe, and came to form his most extensive work, the thirty-nine volumes of *Likutey sikhes* (*Likutey sihot*, collected talks).¹¹³

Over the course of a given *farbrengen* the Rebbe might orate as many as ten or more *sikhes* from his seat on a raised dais. Between talks the Hasidim would sing Ḥabad melodies (*niggunim*), while the Rebbe panned the crowd and responded to those who toasted him with *lekhayim* (*le-ḥayyim*, “to life!”) on small cups of wine or liquor. At times, the Rebbe would encourage the singing to greater levels of intensity by waving his hands in a way reminiscent of a maestro. If the talks could be characterized by intellectual incisiveness, the singing that punctuated them constituted an atmosphere of emotional immersion. The *niggunim* could be lively, or they might be soulful and introspective.

At a moment determined by the Rebbe, he would cue the chief *khoyzer*, Yoel Kahan, who would lead the assembled in singing the so-called “*maymer niggun*.”¹¹⁴ This tune, a contemplative melody, represented a noticeable change in the atmosphere from the liveliness of the preceding song. It also served as the signal for those present to rise to their feet, the position in which they would listen to the discourse, while the Rebbe alone remained seated. As the singing progressed, the Rebbe’s demeanor would change from one of extroversion, responding to those toasting *lekhayim*, to one of withdrawal into himself. In the tradition of the rebbes before

¹¹² See earlier reference to Roth, *ibid*, 102.

¹¹³ Published by Kehot Publication Society. Other *sikhes* are extant in the series of *Torat Menahem* (Lahak Hanachos Inc.), and *Siḥot qodesh* (independently published). Audio of many weekday *sikhes* is available at “Public Address Archives: Recordings of the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of Righteous Memory,” Chabad.org, accessed July 30, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/sichoskodesh_cdo/jewish/Sichos-Kodesh.htm.

¹¹⁴ Also known as Niggun Rostov; audio is available at Eli Lipsker and Velvel Pasternak, “Nigun Rostov,” Chabad.org, accessed November 25, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/music_cdo/aid/140691/jewish/Nigun-Rostov.htm. The *niggun* as sung in preparation for a *ma’amar* can be viewed at Living Torah, “Nigun Rostov,” Chabad.org, accessed August 11, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/3972402/jewish/Nigun-Rostov.htm.

him, he would inconspicuously wrap his right hand in a handkerchief, an act with mystical significance.¹¹⁵ The Rebbe would not look at the assembled during the discourse. The discourse would be delivered in a distinctive singsong that differed from the tone in which the regular talks were spoken, the beginning being recited at a measured pace and clearly enunciated. As the oration progressed, the Rebbe's tone would rise, and at times his pace would pick up as well, even as his words continued to be articulated distinctly.

The *Maymer* of R. Menachem Mendel

The notion that in delivering a discourse a rebbe was essentially repackaging and re-presenting the canonical words of his predecessors was performed by the Rebbe in several unprecedented ways. For one thing, on quite a few occasions the Rebbe would explicitly refer to a discourse of his as being “based on” or “derived from” that of an earlier rebbe.¹¹⁶ But this concept was a factor in another phenomenon unknown in the generations before the Rebbe, and that is the *maymer ke'eyn sikhe* (*ma'amar ke-'eyn siḥah*), the “discourse in the format of a talk.” This technical Ḥabad term indicates a discourse that lacks many of the accoutrements mentioned above that accompanied the “official” *maymer*. The “discourse in the format of a talk” would not be heralded by the *maymer niggun*, would not be heard while the audience stood, would not be recited with closed eyes, and would be intoned as would any other *sikhe*. While the Rebbe would hold a handkerchief, it would be wrapped somewhat differently than was customary for the standard *maymer*. In reference to this alternate style of presenting the discourse, the Rebbe commented on one occasion that due to certain factors (referred to only very obliquely) he was not able to “say *khassides*” at every *farbrengen*, yet “sometimes I smuggle in the recitation of a *maymer* in a *sikhe*, or in the format etc.”¹¹⁷ The implication of all the above is that the *maymer ke'eyn sikhe* is an inferior presentation of the discourse vis-à-vis the conventional format. That this is the case is also suggested by the Rebbe's discontinuation of the conventional *maymer* in 1986, and the almost exclusive employment of the “discourse in the format of a talk” from that point forward.¹¹⁸

Thus under the Rebbe, the modes of conveyance of Ḥabad thought were restructured, and their respective values modified. The *farbrengen* with the rebbe, which had been a much rarer event and had occupied a place of lesser prominence in the life of the follower in earlier generations, now took center stage. The *sikhe* (also known by the Yiddish term *reyd*) therefore became a far more common occurrence, while in earlier times the overwhelming majority of a

¹¹⁵ Portions of a *ma'amar* at Living Torah, “Chassidic Discourse: ‘As in the Days of the Exodus,’” Chabad.org, accessed August 11, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/2552696/jewish/Chasidic-Discourse-As-in-the-Days-of-the-Exodus.htm. Handkerchief noticeable at Living Torah, “A Mamar – Chassidic Discourse,” Chabad.org, accessed August 11, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/269473/jewish/A-Maamar-Chasidic-Discourse.htm. See Jerome Mintz, *Hasidic People*, 48. Rabbi Leib Groner's recollection at min. 4:07, Stump the Rabbi, “Can you describe details of the events surrounding the Rebbe's first maamer and kabalas hanesius?,” YouTube, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHyU9yojils>.

¹¹⁶ See Yosef Yitshaq Shagalov, *Maft'e'ah ma'amarim ve-siḥot*, vol. 2 (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1985), 2, fn6 and fn11, et passim.

¹¹⁷ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Siḥot qodesh – 5732*, vol. 1, 75, The Maft'eiach, accessed August 11, 2020, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U5-ZIgcAqifcy0BWEKIUNDamAjp8sSP0/view>.

¹¹⁸ See Ch. Gender “Maymer, Succession, Continuity.”

rebbe's public pronouncements to his flock came in the form of the discourse. Presumably because of this, a given rebbe's *sikhes* would not be carefully preserved in the way that his discourses were. We will define the *sikhe* here as a rebbe's public discourse that is not the *maymer*. The content and structure of the *sikhe* varies and is not determinative of the category of *sikhe*.¹¹⁹

From Rashab, for instance, there is a single, not very large book of his talks, called *Torat shalom*. The talks represented in this book were collected from transcripts made by Hasidim, a plurality of which were the notes of Rayyats himself, and which were never promulgated through any official Habad organ until their original publication in 1946, many years after Rashab's passing. In R. Menachem Mendel's preface to *Torat shalom* he acknowledges that "with regard to several of the transcripts we were not able to ascertain who had written them... and it is therefore impossible to know how precise they are."¹²⁰ As such it is obvious that these private notes of individuals were not edited or published in any systematic way prior to this. The paucity, both quantitative and qualitative, of the material in *Torat shalom*, and certainly the fact that for his predecessors there are no recorded *sikhes* altogether, all serve to underscore the infrequency of such talks and the limited value placed on preserving them.¹²¹

With the ascendance of the *farbrengen* of the rebbe in the seventh generation, and the concomitant prominence acquired by the *sikhe* as the vehicle of choice for the articulation of the rebbe's thought, greater efforts were made to transcribe and publicize the *sikhes*. In the new format, in which the discourse was part of the *farbrengen* rather than a stand-alone event and in which the *sikhe* rivaled the discourse in terms of the value placed on recording it, the possibility of a new form arose, that of the *maymer ke'eyn sikhe*. Such an amalgam would have made no sense in an earlier generation. We will return to the discussion of what the significance of these innovations in the seventh generation might be. At this point we must turn to one additional incarnation of the Rebbe's discourses, namely the printed version, in both its edited and unedited formats.

The Written Discourse

The procedure for recording and preserving the discourses of the rebbes of Habad constituted an issue to which great attention was given. We already noted the energy which Rashab invested in the review (*khazore*) of his discourses; the process of transcription was likewise a matter of great consequence. Loewenthal describes the care with which R. Schneur Zalman approved transcripts of his discourses for public consumption, placing the responsibility of producing reliable versions in the hands of a select few trusted individuals (including his brother, R. Yehudah Leib, his sons R. Dov Ber and R. Moshe, his grandson R. Menachem Mendel, and his close disciple R. Pinkhos Reyzes), and requiring the Hasidim to submit their copies for review to his brother to ensure their accuracy.¹²² In subsequent generations the rebbes themselves wrote down many of their discourses, at times in advance of their public presentation

¹¹⁹ Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 101 ff, discusses the definition of the content of *sihot*; this is misguided in my opinion. Every rebbe spoke in his own style and on the topics he deemed appropriate.

¹²⁰ Schneersohn, *Torat Shalom*, iii.

¹²¹ Avraham Chanoch Glitzenstein compiled books of *sihot* by earlier rebbes based on the talks of Rayyats.

¹²² Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 67.

and at times following it. Professional scribes rendered their services to the public in producing hand-written copies of these transcripts for a price. As technology became more easily available, discourses began to be duplicated by mimeograph as well.

Nevertheless, until the tenure of Rayyats, very few printed volumes of Ḥabad discourses existed. While R. Schneur Zalman had printed the Tanya and his son R. Dov Ber had printed a number of his own works, these productions, while they may have existed at one point or another in the oral discourse form, had been reworked into book form and did not retain the format of the discourse. The first R. Menakhem Mendel (*Tsemakh tsedek*) undertook the unprecedented and colossal (for that time) venture of the selection and preparation for print of a sampling of his grandfather's discourses, "from among two thousand *ma'amarim*."¹²³ These were printed in two volumes, *Torah ohr* and *Liqqutṭey torah*, organized according to the weekly Torah portion rather than chronologically. There does not seem to have been any further attempt to continue printing the rest of R. Schneur Zalman's discourses, and certainly not those of the subsequent rebbes, at that time, apparently due, at least in part, to the arduousness and expenses of birthing a book into print, and to the challenges of Czarist censorship.¹²⁴

The advent of the twentieth century brought advances in print technology which spurred a greater proliferation of printed material on Hasidism in general, including some discourses of the rebbes of Ḥabad.¹²⁵ Rayyats began printing individual pamphlets containing one or more discourses, which served to supply outlying Ḥabad communities with *maymer* material from the rebbe intended for a specific holy day, in lieu of their hearing the rebbe recite the discourse in person on that occasion, thus affording them a measure of "divine revelation" for those special times. These were later published in America as *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – quntresim*. Rayyats also founded the periodical "*Ha-tamim*" in Poland in the 1930's, a platform upon which to promulgate various genres of Ḥabad literature that he wished to publicize, including a number of Ḥabad discourses.¹²⁶ When this effort was discontinued with the eruption of the Second World War, and Rayyats was forced to flee to the United States, a new era of Ḥabad publication began.

¹²³ Kagan, *Hayom Yom*, 28. See Yosef Yitshaq Keller, "Reshimat ma'amare Admor Ha-zaqen lefi seder ha-shanim," in Yehoshua Mondshine, *Kerem Habad 4* (Kfar Chabad: Makhon Ohale Shem – Lubavitch, 1992), vol. 2, 347 ff.

¹²⁴ See Kagan, *Hayom Yom*, 16, that the printing of these two volumes alone spanned the years 1837-1848 due to the forced closure of Hebrew printshops. Shalom Dovber Levine, *Toledot Habad be-Rusya ha-tsarit: be-shanim 5678-5710* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1989), 123.

An updated version of some of these discourses was prepared by Maharash under the title *Liqute torah le-shalosh parashiyot*, an effort which resulted in near failure as it transpired. See S.D. Levine, "Liqute torah le-gimmel parashiyot," *Qovets yagdil torah*, 3, no. 1 (1979), 52-60; Yehoshua Mondshine, "Parashat hadfasat ha-'Liqute Torah' le-Sefer Bereshit," *Shturem.net*, 9 Adar 5768 (2008), accessed September 7, 2020, http://www.shturem.net/index.php?section=blog_new&article_id=29.

¹²⁵ See S.D. Levine's preface to Hayyim Eliezer Bikhovskiy, *Kitve ha-Reḥa Bikhovski* (Brooklyn: Vaad L'hadfozas Kitvei Harcha Bichovski, 1990), 7-16. Rashab himself engaged in promulgating several *quntresim* (pamphlets) with content similar to that found in the discourses, but as treatises on specific topics: *Quntres ha-'avodah* on divine service, *Quntres ha-tefilah* on prayer, *Quntres ets ha-ḥayyim* on the study of *khassides*, and *Quntres u-ma'ayan* on self-refinement. These were not, however, transcripts of specific discourses, and did not appear in print before the 1940's.

¹²⁶ Otsar Ha-hasidim, *Qovets ha-tamim* (Kfar Chabad: Otsar Ha-hasidim, 1984). See Ada Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," *History and Theory* 27, no. 4 (December, 1988): 119-159, accessed December 16, 2021 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505000>. Cf. Y. Schneersohn, *Igrot qodesh*, 208 et passim, for Rebbe's involvement.

R. Menachem Mendel arrived in the United States together with his wife Haya Mushka in 1941, one year after Rayyats and his family had been extricated from Nazi-occupied Warsaw and had made it to American shores.¹²⁷ There, he was formally tasked by his-father-in-law with (among other duties) overseeing the publishing arm of the Lubavitch court.¹²⁸ With the founding of Kehot Publication Society, or “*Kehos*,” as it became known, the enterprise of printing the wealth of Ḥabad writing began in earnest. The Rebbe personally chose texts for publication, did the bulk of editorial work, raised funds for the printing, and many of the other tasks entailed.¹²⁹

The shift from a primarily manuscript and inexpensive print culture to the format of the published book brought with it other modifications to the traditional Hasidic tome. While in the manuscript layout, and even in the printed books of *Torah ohr* and *Liqqutṭey torah*, glosses and annotations were folded into the text itself within brackets or parentheses, they now began to appear as footnotes beneath the text. With time the inclusion of references within Ḥabad works would become much more meticulous and thoroughgoing, culminating in the copious annotation developed during the publication of the installments of *Likutey sikhes*. This new format represented both a modernization of the texts, as well as a priority of making them accessible to wider, less initiated circles.

As the 1940’s progressed, the volume of publication intensified, while Rayyats’s health deteriorated. Speech became increasingly difficult for him, and thus the delivery of oral discourses became far rarer. In lieu of the oral discourse, Rayyats, with the cooperation of R. Menachem Mendel, began to choose older discourses of his for editing, annotation, and publication, in connection with occasions when the recitation of a *maymer* would have been appropriate, much in the same vein as the concept of the *kuntreysim* (*quntresim*, individual pamphlets of discourses) published in Poland years before. Sometimes Rayyats would add a new *dibur hamaskhil* to the discourse, link different discourses to each other to form a single *hemshekh*, or otherwise modify the content. To these, R. Menachem Mendel would add references and glosses of his own. These would be printed up and disseminated to the Ḥabad communities to be studied on the dates they marked.¹³⁰

Once the Rebbe succeeded his father-in-law and reinstated the oral public discourse, the need for discourses edited by the rebbe and released for special occasions waned.¹³¹ The Rebbe

¹²⁷ See Kehot Publication Society, *Qovets khaf het Sivan: yovel shanim* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1991), 9-19. Bryan Mark Rigg, *The Rabbi Saved by Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers: Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and His Astonishing Rescue* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

¹²⁸ See Kagan, *Hayom yom*, A19; Cf Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Igrot qodesh*, vols. 1-3 (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society), esp. the prefaces by S. D. Levine. On the Rebbe’s publication project, see Hotsa’at Sefarim Qehat, *Hotsa’at sefarim qehat*, 77 ff.; Don Seeman, “Publishing Godliness: The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Other Revolution,” *Jewish Review of Books*, July 16, 2014, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/1085/publishing-godliness-the-lubavitcher-rebbes-other-revolution/> for an overview of the Rebbe’s involvement in, and perspective on, the work of Ḥabad publishing. See Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 136 ff for their assessment of R. Menachem Mendel’s activities at this time.

¹²⁹ See Schneerson, *Igrot qodesh*, vol. 2. 90 where R. Menachem Mendel details some of his responsibilities; S.D. Levine’s preface, *ibid*, 5 ff.

¹³⁰ See the prefaces, tables of contents, and texts of discourses in the collections of Rayyats’s discourses for the years 5706 (1946)-5710 (1950), Yosef Yitshaq Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma’amarim* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1945-2010).

¹³¹ R. Menachem Mendel continued to print up edited discourse pamphlets for several years after Rayyats’s passing.

did edit a handful of discourses over the first decades of his tenure, including his initial *maymer*, but the overwhelming majority of his discourses during those years were transcribed freelance by auditors and disseminated in unofficial format, as type-written carbon copies.¹³² The volume of discourses that were edited during the late 1970's and early 1980's did pick up a bit, but was still quite sporadic, and incommensurate to the volume of discourses delivered during that time.¹³³ However, in late 1986 a discourse dated "19 Kislev 5738 (1977)" was prepared for print with the Rebbe's approval in anticipation of the 1986 commemoration of R. Schneur Zalman's liberation from imprisonment on the 19 of Kislev.¹³⁴ From that point forward, edited discourses, many from previous years, were published by the Rebbe's editorial team under his aegis on a regular basis in observance of various dates of significance on the Jewish and Habad calendar, until he suffered a stroke in early 1992.

The practice of regularly publishing edited discourses on the part of the Rebbe did not coincide with any diminishment in his delivering public discourses orally. However, the mid-1980's marks the beginning of an era during which the Rebbe edited the transcripts of many of his talks during the regular *farbrengens* and the like.¹³⁵ Apparently the Rebbe had decided to turn his focus to producing official versions of his orations; we can speculate that this was spurred by the ongoing court case about the ownership of Rayyats's books during that period.¹³⁶ Whatever the reason, this system continued until the Rebbe's stroke in 1992, when all public speaking and editing on his part ceased.

Mugah vs. Bilti Mugah

As the question of the edited status of the Rebbe's talks and discourses was material to him, it is relevant to describe, albeit briefly, how discourses might be categorized. As mentioned, most of the previous rebbes wrote their discourses themselves, and R. Schneur Zalman insisted on his Hasidim obtaining authorized copies of his discourses. The Rebbe wrote almost nothing of his discourses personally, and initially did not have a system in place for producing authorized versions. Aside for the handful of discourses that he edited early on, he required that discourses or *sikhes* that he had not approved as accurate be reproduced in unprofessional copies, using carbon paper or stencils rather than proper printing. Each page had to be marked as *bilti mugah*

¹³² During the first two decades of the Rebbe's leadership there were 11 discourses that were promulgated as edited, see table of contents in Schneerson, *Meluqat*, vol. 1.

¹³³ Compare the list of edited discourses in the table of contents of the previous note with the list of discourses recorded in Va'ad Hanahot be-Lahaq, *Maft'e'ah ma'amare*. During 5735 (1974-75), e.g., the Rebbe delivered 45 discourses, but edited only three; in 5736 (1975-76), 50 discourses were delivered, three edited; in 5745 (1984-85), 52 discourses were said, and none were edited.

¹³⁴ Schneerson, *Meluqat*, 2:2.

¹³⁵ See addenda to Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, vols. 20-29 for edited talks of 1983-87; Schneerson, *Sefer ha-sihot* – 5747, 2 vols., for talks of 1986-87.

¹³⁶ Ch. on Gender, "Maymer, Succession, and Continuity." Note that the beginning of the regular editing of discourses was in anticipation of 19 Kislev of 5746, the beginning of the court case (December 2, 1985).

(unedited), so that no mistake was made that the contents of the page did not represent any official position of the Rebbe's or of Habad.¹³⁷

For a discourse to be deemed *mugah* (edited), an initial draft would be prepared by the chief *khoyzer* of the Rebbe's court, Yoel Kahan¹³⁸, whom the Rebbe trusted to accurately reconstruct the contents of the *farbrengens*; from the 1960's on, Kahan was joined by some of his understudies at the Lubavitch yeshivah, who assisted in writing up the talks so that they met the Rebbe's standards. The draft would be submitted to the Rebbe for review, and he would add comments, notes, and instructions; these would then be worked into a second draft which was submitted once again for final approval. The official, *mugah* versions were sanctioned to be printed and to have logo of the Lubavitch publishing house, Kehos, affixed to it.

In the eyes of the Hasidim, the discourse in its *mugah* form represented a more authentic artifact than the unofficial versions. This was not only because it could be relied on as accurate and more faithful to the Rebbe's words; in fact, the original, unedited transcript was more likely to be closer to how the Rebbe had said the *maymer*. Rather, as something into which the Rebbe had poured his time and energy and to which he had given his stamp of approval, the *mugah* discourse could be seen as not merely representing what the Rebbe had said on another occasion, but as itself being an additional vehicle of expression of the divine revelation for which the Rebbe was a conduit. Thus, a discourse which had been delivered in 1967 but which was published officially in 1991 became the "new" discourse for the time of its publication, replete with the messages and topics that related to the life of the Hasid in 1991. These *mugah* discourses thus reinstated in most instances the practice of Rayyats to provide an authoritative printed discourse as embodiment of the event of an oral delivery by the rebbe. It is noteworthy that in printed format, no distinction was made between the standard discourse (*maymer*) and the discourse in the format of a talk (*maymer k'eyn sikhe*). Thus while the original recitation of the discourse may have been somewhat muted (or "smuggled," in the Rebbe's locution), once promulgated as a physical text it rose to a standing equal with that of the traditional discourse.

As was the practice of the rebbes before him, the Rebbe would recite the discourse in Yiddish (albeit peppered with Hebrew technical terms, Biblical verses, Talmudic aphorisms, etc.), while the transcripts would be made in Hebrew (albeit with Yiddish words or phrases periodically interjected). The rebbes of earlier generations personally made this switch in writing their own discourses, whether the writing preceded the delivery or followed it; for the Rebbe this precedent was followed by the editorial staff who prepared the texts for publication.¹³⁹ In Habad history there are a few exceptions to this rule, notably in certain discourses of Rayyats's that were published in Yiddish; however, these are the exceptions that prove the rule.¹⁴⁰ While not a

¹³⁷ See b*Ketubot*, 19a. Rabbi Leibel Schapiro explains the evolution of the transcriptions and the progressive levels of officialness they were accorded by the Rebbe; Leib Schapiro "R' Schapiro zichronos," WhatsApp group, #68.

¹³⁸ In the course of the preparation of this dissertation, Rabbi Yoel ben Refoel Nakhman ha-Kohen Kahan ("Reb Yoel") passed away, Thursday, 6 *Menaḥem-Av*, 5781/July 15, 2021.

¹³⁹ There are a couple of partial transcripts, as well as notes of the Rebbe's in preparation of the discourse (e.g., *Bosi legani* 5717 (see addendum)) or during the editing process, all in Hebrew.

¹⁴⁰ Y. Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – Yiddish* (1986); several discourses in Y. Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – quntresim*, 3 vols. (1962). The treatise *Poqe'ah ivrim* in Dov Ber Schneuri, *Ma'amare Admor ha-Emtsa'i – quntresim* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2005), 447 ff. was written in Yiddish, and see also two discourses by the *Tsemakh Tsedek* in addendum to Yosef Yitshaq

particularly remarkable phenomenon in its own right, it does serve to distinguish the *maymer*, the discourse, from the *sikhe*, the talk, the latter being set into writing often as not in Yiddish, as it was said. This is true for the talks of both Rayyats as well as the Rebbe; it is also true of those talks that the Rebbe approved for official dissemination as *mugah*.

Bosi Legani

Having surveyed the phenomenon of the Ḥabad *maymer* in general, we should spend some time examining the particular discourses that are of interest to us here, the *hemshekh Bosi legani*. The sixth rebbe, Rayyats, had a discourse published, beginning with the *dibur hamaskhil* of *Bosi legani* ('I have come to my garden' (Song 5:1)), to be studied on Saturday, 10 Shevat, 5710 (January 28, 1950), the anniversary of the passing of his grandmother, wife of the fourth rebbe.¹⁴¹ It transpired that Rayyats himself passed away that Saturday morning. The discourse, together with the remaining three discourses of the series, thus became "*hemshekh hahilulo* (*hemshekh ha-hillula*)," the series of discourses associated with the passing,¹⁴² a species of ethical will.¹⁴³ R. Menachem Mendel, who succeeded his father-in-law as rebbe, used this *hemshekh* as the basis for his own *maymer* that he delivered on the *yohrtsayt* (anniversary of death) each year, amplifying on one of its twenty chapters in sequence. After commenting on all twenty chapters over the twenty years from 1951-1970, the Rebbe began a second round of commentating discourses. The final installment of the second review was delivered in 1988; from then until 1992, the Rebbe released an edited publication of an earlier discourse expounding on the chapter associated with the respective year.

One of the striking features of these discourses is that teachings of each of the previous Ḥabad rebbes are cited in each one, as well as from the Besht and the Maggid. By recourse to these teachings, R. Menachem Mendel introduces fresh insights into the teachings of Rayyats. This format was drawn from the discourse recited by Rayyats on the occasion of R. Menachem Mendel's marriage to Rayyats's daughter, Haya Mushka in 5689 (1928). The wedding ceremony began with the sixth rebbe delivering the discourse titled *Lekho doydi* (*Lekkah dodi*, 'Come, my beloved, to greet the bride,' expounding a phrase from the Sabbath liturgy). As a preface, Rayyats remarked that he would include in the discourse teachings by all the previous rebbes, "as an invitation to the souls of the *tsadikim* (*zaddiqim*, saints), our illustrious ancestors the sainted rebbes who will be coming to the wedding canopy to bless the couple".¹⁴⁴ The Rebbe himself gave an additional, twofold rationale for his own practice: Because "when one is truly distressed

Schneerson, *Admor "ha-Tsemah Tsedeg" u-tenu'at "ha-Haskallah"* (Brooklyn: Ozar Hachassidim Lubavitz, 1976), 58 ff.

¹⁴¹ For a retrospective on her life by Rayyats, see "Supplement A: Her Husband's Crown – Biography of the Rebbe Maharash's Wife, Rebbetzin Rivkah," in Shimon Neubort, trans., *Sefer HaToldos Admur Maharash: A Biographical Sketch of the Rebbe Maharash, Compiled by the Rebbe from the Sichos and Notes of his Father-in-Law, the Rebbe Rayatz* (Brooklyn: Sichos in English, 2001), 119-188.

¹⁴² The word *hillula*, Aramaic for "wedding," is used to designate the passing of a saintly individual. See Shelly Goldberg, "Understanding the 'Hillula'," 55-59, for the evolution of this term.

¹⁴³ For the term *hemshekh ha-hillula* and related terms, see Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, iii-iv, and loc cit. See ibid and Ch. Intertextuality, "Sources of Authority," re: the treatment of the discourse as guidance for the period after Rayyats's leadership.

¹⁴⁴ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Torat Menahem – Derushe hatunah*, (Brooklyn: Vaad Hanochos BLaHak, 2000), 15.

over inability to understand the words of our rabbis and one mentions their names... it is beneficial”; additionally, this was a method of eliciting “ancestral merit (*zkhush ovoys (zekhut avot)*).”¹⁴⁵ This phenomenon of mentioning each of the rebbes by name became characteristic of the annual *Bosi legani* discourses, much in the same way that one could anticipate the chapter of the *hemshekh* upon which the Rebbe would focus.

R. Menachem Mendel’s *Bosi legani* discourses thus instantiate the phenomena of *hemshekh* and of being *meyusad*, based on the hereditary teachings, in both exemplary and singular ways. As a *hemshekh*, R. Menachem Mendel’s work is built upon a traditional series of four consecutive discourses. The seventh rebbe treats each chapter of the discourse not in consecutive fashion, but on an annual basis. He thus forms a new type of *hemshekh*, one which links the same date over the span of years, rather than linking a number of weeks over a given year or the like. Nevertheless, within the overall concatenation of 10 Shevat *maymorim*, there are also several mini-*hemsheykhim* relating to a given chapter. Thus, for example, the first *Bosi legani* delivered by the Rebbe on 10 Shevat 5711 (1951) was followed up on the next Sabbath, 13 Shevat, with a second discourse on the topic. In 5733 (1973) R. Menachem Mendel delivered two *Bosi legani* discourses over the Sabbath that coincided with 10 Shevat, followed by two additional related discourses on the subsequent Sabbaths. The Rebbe thus hews to the traditional form of *hemshekh* for the most part but departs from it in a unique way for his treatment of Rayyats’s final discourse. I am not aware of any other example of this type of *hemshekh* in annual installments, either in the Rebbe’s own oeuvre or in that of any of the other rebbes of Habad.

The concept of being *meyusad*, based or built upon the work of earlier rebbes, also takes on new form in the Rebbe’s output in general, and particularly in his *Bosi legani*, even as it maintains continuity with earlier formats. The standard method of repackaging earlier teachings is evident in the evolution of the original *Bosi legani* discourse: A discourse by the *Tsemakh tsedek*, glossed by his son Maharash, and a discourse attributed directly to Maharash, form the basis for two discourses by the latter’s son, Rashab, delivered twenty-two years apart from each other. Rayyats then yoked the two discourses by his father into a single *hemshekh* of two discourses, repeating them almost verbatim. Over these four generations, each rebbe repeats the words of his predecessor(s) in much the same language, without direct attribution.¹⁴⁶ There are examples of this kind of *hit-yasedut* (founding) among the Rebbe’s discourses as well.¹⁴⁷ Among the Rebbe’s discourses there are also, of course, a multitude of discourses which follow the pattern of presenting traditional Habad concepts in a novel way, by elaborating upon them, using them to address different questions, and so forth. What is especially characteristic of the Rebbe’s discourses where he appears to depart from his predecessors is in his more regular explicit attribution to his sources, as exemplified in his opening of his first discourse of *Bosi legani*, 5711 (1951), which he prefaces with the words, “My father-in-law, the Rebbe, writes in the discourse [associated with] the day of his passing...”¹⁴⁸ Thus the discourse is explicitly *presented* as *meyusad*. Many discourses consist of the unpacking of a specific named discourse, in the manner of a commentary, as noted above; this is true of many of the *Bosi legani* discourses as well, particularly in the first cycle. In the context of the *Bosi legani* discourses in particular (as well as

¹⁴⁵ Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, vol. 2, 515 and in sources cited. Discussed in Ch. Intertextuality.

¹⁴⁶ See Ch. Intertextuality, “The Golden Chain,” where this is elaborated on.

¹⁴⁷ See above, [fn28].

¹⁴⁸ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 6.

certain other of his discourses), the idea of being *meysad* is further textured. Aside for the discourse drawing on and interpreting Rayyats's discourse, the Rebbe builds within it upon teachings of each of the rebbes in the Ḥabad chain of tradition, and attributes to each one by name. Besides the one wedding discourse by Rayyats cited above, this is a practice unique to the Rebbe; citing each rebbe by name, moreover, is not found even in Rayyats's discourse.

One other unique characteristic of the Rebbe's discourses worthy of note here is the ending. The standard Ḥabad discourses concludes with the resolution of the issue with which it had contended, or with the clarification of the questions raised at its outset. The Rebbe's discourses typically contain an additional coda, known as the *brokho* (*berakhah*, blessing), which would pivot from the analytical tenor of the discourse to a tone of prayer that the themes of the discourse be actualized, and particularly that they hasten the arrival of the messianic epiphany. This shift was noticeable in the Rebbe's inflection as well, which changed from the tune of the *maymer* to that of the *sikhe*. The above is merely to observe this format; in further chapters we will return to these characteristics of the Ḥabad discourses and probe the claims implicit in the various forms the discourse may take.

In a subsequent chapter we will return to some of the content and themes of the *Bosi legani* discourses. I will focus on three specific discourses: The original *Bosi legani* (5710/1950) by Rayyats, and particularly its seventh chapter; and the two discourses by the Rebbe which treat the seventh chapter, those of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977). I have chosen to focus on these discourses for several reasons: first, because it is my contention that the salient properties of the Rebbe's discourses in general and of his *Bosi legani* discourses in particular, together with the implications for the Rebbe's conception of rebbehood to be discussed in the forthcoming chapters, are not unique to any one given discourse, but can be derived from any discourse. I refrained from choosing the initial 1951 discourse, because it has already been much discussed, and because it is exemplary, it seems to me, of the distraction that the messianic aspect of the Rebbe's teaching presents to noticing the larger context of his worldview which defines and explains this messianism.¹⁴⁹ If any cross section of *Bosi legani* will bear out my claims, the seventh chapter seems especially appropriate, in light of the Midrashic phrase repeated in (almost?) every *Bosi legani* discourse, "all sevenths are beloved," a phrase that the Rebbe himself applies to the seventh chapter as well.¹⁵⁰ On a personal note, one of the discourses on the seventh chapter of *Bosi legani* was delivered on the first 10 Shevat commemoration after I was born, and this chapter was the one studied the year I began writing this dissertation.

Conclusion

The recitation of "Torah" by a Hasidic master represents an occasion of access to the divine realm for his adherents, facilitated by the rebbe. The teaching is the "word of G-d," being revealed within history and perceptible to the human ear and eye. The phenomenon of "saying *khassides*" continues the legacy of the Kabbalists in important ways, as it expounds on the same

¹⁴⁹ See Krauss, *Ha-shevi'i*. Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 10-12, and 17-20. While Wolfson does accentuate the messianic elements of the first discourse, he does also return to it to underscore other elements within it, and contends overall that the significance of the Rebbe's messianism is of greater consequence than his messianic identity, see *ibid.*, 272.

¹⁵⁰ See Ch. Intertextuality, "All Sevenths are Beloved," for more on this phrase.

topics treated by the Kabbalah and reenacts the belief upheld by the Kabbalists that their wisdom embodied communication and revelation by the divine.¹⁵¹ In particular, it comprehends the teachings of the Kabbalist seen as the founding figure of Hasidism, R. Israel Baal Shem Tov, and its articulation enacts the Messiah's prophecy of "when your wellsprings will be disseminated outward."

The Ḥabad discourse forms the core around which participation in the Ḥabad identity crystalizes. It is delivered or "revealed" by a rebbe, and therefore the one who delivers it is a rebbe. The discourse represents the ultimate bestowal from a rebbe to his Hasidim, the consummate moment of communication, and therefore the Hasid's experience of the discourse defines their identity as a Hasid and their relationship to their rebbe. Hearing the discourse, reviewing it, studying it, preserving its tangible written manifestation, memorizing it, and absorbing its ethos, are not only what set the Hasid on the path of self-actualization, but represent their attachment to the rebbe that bequeathed the *ma'amar* to them. While there are also other avenues of interaction between Hasid and rebbe, the discourse retains its standing as the quintessential embodiment of membership in Ḥabad. On the social level, the discourse lies at the center of the opportunities for Hasidic congregating and interaction, providing the fundamental common language and ethos that all partake of. Thus any attempt to define the Ḥabad form of Hasidism and to explain its character must be made with an appreciation of the significance of the *maymer divrey eloykim khayim*.

The background, content, and societal situating of the discourses of *Bosi legani* provide a comprehensively representative cross-section of the characteristics present in Ḥabad discourses in general. These, moreover, possess certain singular qualities that are rare or unattested in other discourses, such as the attributed quotation from each of the seven generations of Ḥabad rebbes, and the serial format of annual recitation, which serve to further enrich our appreciation of the implications of the singular conventions of the Ḥabad discourse in general. In particular, in the ensuing chapters I will elaborate on the insights into the seventh rebbe's own view of himself, his rebbe-hood, his priorities as rebbe, and his relationship with his Hasidim, that emerge from the *Bosi legani* discourses in more explicit and richer detail than from other facets of his oeuvre.

¹⁵¹ See the claim of Raavad (R. Abraham ben David of Posquieres) that "the holy spirit appeared in our study hall," in Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Lulav, 8:5.

Chapter 3 - Perpetuating the Voice of Authority: The Ḥabad Discourse as Midrash

If, as I argued above, the Ḥabad discourse lies at the root of Ḥabad society and *Weltanschauung*, then we must offer a methodology for reading the discourse and particularly to be able to isolate the salient facets that are identity-shaping. As such, we must take a heterogeneous approach to the text. Ariel Roth offers a “model for reading the Ḥabad text,” but limits himself to the analytical element alone.¹⁵² He argues, correctly, that his model will “allow both a reader that is a member of [Ḥabad] as well as an outside reader to achieve a more profound contemplation of the texts.”¹⁵³ Roth puts forward what he calls a “synoptic model” of reading Ḥabad texts,¹⁵⁴ which differs, in his opinion, from earlier models that have been suggested in that it does not focus exclusively on the analysis of a concept within the thought of a given master or of several, but begins with textual analysis. By this Roth intends “a reversal of directions: instead of focusing upon a term or concept and examining how it has been defined in the writings of Ḥabad Hasidism, [this model] centers on the textual unit: the *ma’amar*, the *hemshekh*, and the like... The synoptic model allows us to engage in the inner-Ḥabad dialogue that has formed around [its own] texts.”¹⁵⁵ In this way he hopes to address the lacuna remaining in earlier models of reading which have overlooked or disregarded the dialogue and interdependency that is a fundamental property of these texts.

Roth has certainly proffered a necessary intervention in the analysis of Ḥabad texts, and developed a salutary model for reading towards textual analysis. I will not offer an alternate model or critique his methodology. I do, however, wish to suggest that our objective should be not only to comprehend the texts, but to understand how they function socially in the way they are heard by and affect the Hasidic audience as well; therefore we must be able to at least identify the characteristics of the text that impact the Hasid in those ways that transcend the intellectual exercise alone.¹⁵⁶ My proposal is to lay out a method of reading that I refer to as “midrashic intertextuality.” This approach hinges on an accurate appreciation of both parts of the term, understanding what is meant by “intertextuality,” and what kinds of texts may be categorized as “midrashic.” Elucidating midrashic intertextuality will be the project of the following chapters. I contend that by reading through the lens of midrashic intertextuality, we can deepen our comprehension of the very facets that Roth seeks to highlight within the Ḥabad text: the import of the intertextual dialogue within the Ḥabad corpus as well as beyond it, and the way the Ḥabad discourse is understood by the rebbe that delivers it and by the Hasidim that hear it.

¹⁵² Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 167. All translations of Roth here are my own.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 168.

¹⁵⁴ In the wake of Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Touchstone, 1972).

¹⁵⁵ Roth, *ibid*, 197-8.

¹⁵⁶ See Arthur Green, “Teachings of the Hasidic Masters,” in Barry W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006), 368 ff. where he suggests four levels to reading Hasidic text, including hearing it with the Hasid’s ear.

Intertextuality, as Daniel Boyarin has commented, signifies “that no texts... are organic, self-contained unities... Every text is ultimately dialogical in that it cannot but record traces of its contentions and doubling of earlier discourses.”¹⁵⁷ As a condition of all texts, then, the utility of the term in speaking of a given text is not so much in noting the presence of such ties to other texts (they are invariably there), but in describing the tone and tenor of those references. What new light is cast upon the text by plumbing its relationship with its antecedent texts? To state more plainly, the significance of the phenomenon of intertextuality is not in its presence, but in the method the source text is invoked (allusion, citation, paraphrase, etc.) and in the tension created between it and the invoking text.

In defining a pattern of intertextuality using the adjective “midrashic,” I am suggesting that there are texts of Midrash, capital “M,” by which I mean the classical works of Rabbinic Midrash of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In addition there are texts that may be described as “midrashic,” lowercase “m,” which may be applied to texts that, while not properly part of the era or even the genre of classical Midrash, nevertheless partake of the (to my mind) definitive characteristics of the Midrash. Among such midrashic texts are included the Ḥabad corpus in general, and the oeuvre of the seventh rebbe specifically (for our present purposes). I will posit now that these seek to perpetuate something I will call the “Voice of Authority” of the traditions from which they emerge, the voice of divinity that is understood to be speaking through those traditions. Careful consideration of the intertextual confrontations between these texts and their sources should therefore demonstrate not only what influences are at play in the shaping of their ideas, but more significantly, what strategies they use in order to represent, or even ventriloquize, the authority of the traditions they have inherited. Let us begin, then, by developing a nuanced understanding of the nature of Midrash, and demonstrate how it exhibits the properties claimed for it above.

Defining Midrash

The late antique rabbinic genre of literary output known as Midrash possesses unique and identifiable characteristics in form as well as ideology. The identification of such qualities is fundamental to an appreciation of Jewish modes of thinking from the Midrashic era and onward.¹⁵⁸ The term Midrash, the precise definition and parameters of which continues to bedevil scholarship, refers to more than a discrete set of collections of rabbinic musings (predominately) on the biblical texts; it constitutes an exegetical methodology, and in turn a conceptual superstructure within which to organize history, nature, and the construction of identity.¹⁵⁹ What I see as the primary ideological feature of Midrash which I will isolate here, goes some way to account for several of its exegetical and hermeneutic aspects, as I will show later on. Consequently, it will be possible to use the term “midrashic” meaningfully when

¹⁵⁷ Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ For a broad overview of Midrashic influence in Jewish intellectual life see Michael Fishbane, ed., *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought and History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Fishbane and Joanna Weinberg, eds., *Midrash Unbound: Transformations and Innovations* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013).

¹⁵⁹ See Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, viii.

speaking of a text, designating the ways in which it is so. The case-study of the modern phenomenon in Jewish intellectual production of Ḥabad Hasidism serves to exemplify the continued presence of midrashicity in the Jewish imagination, and in turn to accentuate that which is essential among the elements that constitute Midrash.

The question of what the nature of Midrash is has been engaged by a multitude of scholars over many decades, resulting in a plethora of viewpoints and at times vigorous debates.¹⁶⁰ Here I would like to consider specifically some of the arguments proffered by Moshe Idel, who reflects on the implications of the relationship between the hermeneutics and the theology of the Midrashic works. The observation that such a relationship exists in the first place and the way that Idel accounts for it, make for an insightful treatment of the question of what is midrashic about Midrash, and provide an entry point for our discussion.

Idel identifies the qualities peculiar to Midrash by contrasting it with other genres of Jewish intellectual output.¹⁶¹ The designation of a text as midrashic is appropriate, per Idel, when it exhibits what he considers to be the salient characteristic of Midrash, which may be summed up as “a deeply hermeneutical struggle with the *semantic* aspects of the text,” characterized by “the *unexpected results* produced by using *purely linguistic* interpretive techniques.” This he opposes to un-midrashic texts that employ other “types of interpretations (allegorical or symbolic) ... to achieve *expected results*.”¹⁶²

The key, Idel posits, to accounting for the differences in strategy and in underlying assumption adopted by these varying genres of Jewish thought, is the presence or absence of elaborated theologies within the respective interpretive systems. “The absence of an explicit or systematic theology [is what] enabled a freer hermeneutical attitude to the text to develop in the Talmud and Midrash... It is the nonmetaphysical approach to the text that enabled the midrashists to maintain its relative openness,” whereas there is a “fateful correlation between a certain theology and predictable interpretations” in other contemporaneous Jewish literary creations.¹⁶³ A less dogmatic, more flexible view on the nature of G-d went hand in hand with a more fluid, “nonconstellated” hermeneutic approach to the canonical text.¹⁶⁴

What does Idel mean when he refers to “elaborated theologies?”¹⁶⁵ Some of the examples adduced by Idel as non-Midrashic because theological include the *Hekhalot* texts and *Sefer Yetsirah*, which he describes as having a “strong theological bias [that is] so evident.”¹⁶⁶ Yet, these tracts are far from what we might consider systematic in elaborating their theologies (in contrast to books such as R. Saadia Gaon’s *Beliefs and Opinions* or Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*). On the other hand, if by “elaborated” Idel means that a text may articulate certain assertions about the nature of the divine, which assertions might be presumed to form part of a larger theological system, but that these articulations appear within the text in an unsystematic way, then it is harder to see where this is to be differentiated from Midrash. As Idel himself is

¹⁶⁰ As evidenced in the variety of viewpoints in Fishbane, and Weinberg, *ibid*; see esp. Boyarin’s introduction in *Intertextuality*, 1 ff.

¹⁶¹ Moshe Idel, “Midrashic versus Other Forms of Hermeneutics: Some Comparative Reflections,” in Fishbane, *The Midrashic Imagination*, 45-58.

¹⁶² Idel, *ibid*, 52-53 (emphases mine).

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 50.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 55-56.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 51.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 50.

careful to qualify, the Midrashic rabbis certainly entertained theologies of their own, which fact, however, “has never been presented explicitly.”¹⁶⁷ This ambiguous description would seemingly be analogously applicable to the *Heikhalot* and *Sefer Yetsirah* texts as well, in that they too operate under certain theological presumptions that are rarely stated explicitly. In what way does Idel then differentiate between those texts that belong to the midrashic category and those that are theological in nature?

Idel notes a certain deliberate tactic by the midrashists of avoiding direct and articulated theology, unlike the works mentioned above that directly address the nature of the divine. Instead, the Midrashic thinkers are preoccupied with “a theology inclined to emphasizing the divine will – that is... an ever-changing power that cannot be easily formulated in itself.”¹⁶⁸ This un-theology in turn correlates with the rabbis’ attitudes toward and hermeneutics of the biblical text itself: The absence of an explicit theology allows for a more fluid hermeneutical attitude toward the biblical text, as a direct result of taking a nonmetaphysical approach to interpreting the text. This open attitude toward the biblical text allowed for a hermeneutical project that was accessible to the wider community, in contradistinction to approaches that adopted “telescopic” or “microscopic” examinations of the text and which were intended for a more exclusive initiated elite.¹⁶⁹ Finally, the types of interpretations achieved through Midrash are “fluid” or “unexpected,” while those achieved in the theological tracts are “frozen” (sic) or “expected,” even “fated.”

I therefore understand Idel’s distinction between texts he deems “theological” and those that he deems “Midrashic” and perforce non-theological by definition, as differentiating between those works that consider the *nature* of G-d, which is static, and those that consider the divine *will* and its consequences, which are dynamic. Formally this difference is expressed by the presence or absence of an explicit theology, the elaboration of which would (apparently) of necessity fix the state of the divine realm. An exception to this distinction can be found in the literature of the Zohar, which is at once Kabbalistic-theological and Midrashic. Idel accounts for this by noting how the Zoharic texts distinguish themselves from other Kabbalistic works: They lack the technical terms so prevalent in other Kabbalistic treatises, utilize rhetorical strategies akin to those of Midrash, and contain “an implicit theology deriving from interrelated biblical verses.”¹⁷⁰ They fuse the static and anthropomorphic *Hekhalot* theology with the dynamic and personalistic attitude of Midrashic thought, the static view being “activated... by the biblical and midrashic views of G-d as will and power that can be augmented or diminished.”¹⁷¹ Therefore the Zohar becomes Midrashic precisely to the extent that it abandons a theology that is explicit and frozen.

It would thus appear that in Idel’s conception, there is an inescapable and crucial ideological correlation between the content of a given text (is its subject the divine nature or its will?), its form (is its hermeneutic fated or fluid?), its presentation of a theology (explicit or implicit), and its target audience (elite or popular). A hermeneutic that is primarily interested in the semantics and content of the biblical text will remain “deeply immersed in the same domain

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 53.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 50 ff.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 54-55.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 55.

of problems that preoccupied biblical thinking,” which indeed gives little space to the nature or description of the deity. It will refrain from elaborating an explicit theology, which would then of necessity be superimposed onto the biblical text, preferring to interrogate the texts themselves for the solutions to theological quandaries, and to discover the possible implications and messages that the text wishes to offer up.¹⁷² This form and content in turn may be purveyed to the wider community: “By remaining faithful to the syntactic and semantic components of the text, the sages of the Midrash were able to communicate messages that could be adapted to changing historical circumstances... The Midrash is naturally related to the oral, fluid aspects of communication.”¹⁷³ We may question whether describing Midrash as “remaining faithful to the syntactic and semantic components of the text” is a valid characterization; perhaps Idel means that the midrashists recognize that syntax and words exist, even as they take broad liberties with them, while other texts pare the Biblical verses down to disjointed letters or the like. At any rate, even as Idel allows for the coincidence of theology and midrashicity, such as in the Zohar, it is only where and to the extent that there is an attenuation of the theological features of the composition and a return to the midrashic.

To return to the question of the nature of the *Hekhalot* texts and *Sefer Yetsirah*, these are minimally concerned with interpretation of the biblical texts and with the variegations of the divine will, and primarily concerned with the state of the divine realm and its nature. It may be the case that these texts do not spell out a comprehensive theology, but they consistently address issues related to the divine being and to the extent that they interact with the biblical writings it is in the mode of importing their theology into the text. Certainly at the level of form, these texts adopt telescopic (in the case of the *Hekhalot* texts, where the Torah is conceived of as a cosmic entity rather than a text) or microscopic (in the case of *Sefer Yetsirah*, where the focus is on letters rather than language or content) positions vis-à-vis the Bible and indeed the Hebrew language itself, rather than a hermeneutic that preserves the biblical syntax (to the extent that Midrash does so). It is in this sense that I understand Idel’s drawing a distinction between these texts and Midrash.

When we seek to define what is notable about the Midrashic project, what it is that sets it apart from other corpora of biblical exegesis and from other forms of intellectual output, both Jewish and otherwise, Idel provides us with a fine set of parameters that delineate its distinctive features. His definition of Midrash focuses on a set of ideological positions which generate a hermeneutic, rather than merely describing the latter’s formal elements. Midrash is not only biblical exegesis, nor even a specific kind of biblical exegesis, e.g. one that is tightly bound up with the Scriptural passages it engages,¹⁷⁴ but a rejection of ideologies that draw on extra-biblical sources and an attunement to what the text itself deems significant.

Thus Idel explicitly allows that the term “midrash” may be applied to texts that are outside of the classical Midrashic compilations, such as the Zohar and to some extent the teachings of eighteenth-century Polish Hasidism. So long as they possess the defining features of Midrash, other texts may also be deemed Midrash, or as I prefer to term them, midrashic. However, as the example of the Zohar addressed by Idel already indicates, there will inevitably be texts that hew to the definition of Midrash to a degree, but also depart from it in other

¹⁷² See *ibid*, 52.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 50.

¹⁷⁴ See Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination*, 15.

respects. Using the barometer laid out by Idel, we can expect to find an inverse relationship between the fixedness of a text's theology and the playfulness or fluidity of its exegesis. Yet, I contend that there are texts that possess both of these characteristics, and as such they compel us to refine Idel's definition and to revisit the opposition he sets up. The texts I refer to are the writings of the rebbes of Ḥabad, the teachings of the Ḥabad Hasidic corpus.

It would be apposite to stop for a moment and justify my emphasis on Ḥabad thought. Idel himself refers to Hasidism as a body of Jewish intellectual production that would seem to move closer to Midrash. "The reappearance of orality in Hasidic circles... was a crucial watershed that contributed toward... the reemergence of simpler and more fluid theologies – informed by a simpler and more flexible hermeneutics."¹⁷⁵ However, in many ways the Ḥabad school of Hasidism is anomalous among the other Hasidic circles, and in this regard precisely with relation to the features that Idel indicates. While maintaining a vibrant culture of orality, Ḥabad possesses a strong textual component, the study of the writings of the rebbes representing a defining characteristic of the Ḥabad ethos. Within this textuality there takes shape an elaborate and elaborated theology that is quite sophisticated.¹⁷⁶ So while Idel's summation of the Midrashic elements of Hasidism may be accurate in the broader sense, Ḥabad in particular would seem to defy this categorization. The question therefore remains, can the Ḥabad texts be designated as midrashic, and what would the implications of such a designation be for Idel's theory?

Our understanding of the non-theological character of midrashic literature above was, in the first place, related to the content of these texts not being preoccupied by, or even avoiding, questions relating to the nature of the divine. Put in other words, Idel argued for a theology of fluidity, of a deity that is reciprocally impacting and impacted by the deeds of humanity, within Midrash, while observing an unchanging deity in the works he deems "theological." (Again we may question whether, if such be the case, "theology" should be the defining factor for Idel, since either side is ultimately taking a position on the nature of G-d.) When turning to the Ḥabad texts we observe that they are substantially focused on the divine and its character. Ḥabad thought is greatly indebted to Lurianic Kabbalah for much of its cosmology and theology, the latter having been described by Idel as a literature in which the symbolic was absorbed into a comprehensive and detailed myth, and which rendered the "religion" mechanical and schematic, the exact conditions that make Midrash impossible.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, Ḥabad theology retains the idea of a certain dynamism within the divine realm that is quite like the G-d of Midrash.

If we believe Idel, the midrashists "sacrificed... the mysterious and magical attainment of their contemporaries" by circumventing "the fateful correlation between a certain theology and predictable interpretations," so that they remained with a text "that can be addressed to a larger community."¹⁷⁸ The ethos of Ḥabad placed a premium on exactly the element of communication to a wider audience, even as the content of that communication was the esoterica which the midrashists were supposed to have avoided.¹⁷⁹ Idel does note that there is in Polish Hasidism a psychological reinterpretation of the kabbalistic terminology, and because of this the role of the

¹⁷⁵ Idel, *Ibid*, 55-56.

¹⁷⁶ Some of the contents and genealogy of this theology is elaborated on below in Ch Bittul, "Key Terms."

¹⁷⁷ Idel, *ibid*, 54; 56.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 50.

¹⁷⁹ See Loewenthal, *Communicating*, esp. 43 ff.

Kabbalah's language is attenuated.¹⁸⁰ However once again (as noted regarding Hasidic orality), at least in the case of Ḥabad, while the phenomenon of the psychologization of kabbalistic concepts is fundamental to its outlook, there remains a prodigious engagement with the esoteric language, content, and interests of the kabbalistic texts.¹⁸¹

Finally, there is the question of form. Idel's description of the Midrashic hermeneutic as being primarily engaged with the semantic and syntactic elements of the texts it interprets and producing exegeses that are not predetermined could just as easily be applied to much of Ḥabad writing, particularly the format of the discourse (*maymer*). Even treatises such as the book of *Tanya* or the *quntresim* ("booklets") of the fifth rebbe, R. Sholom Dovber, are often presented in exegetical form, presenting their ideas as sustained meditations on passages from the classical texts. The Ḥabad leaders, like the midrashists, "read the Torah with regular glasses... without exploding its inner syntax."¹⁸² One important distinction between the Ḥabad project and that of Midrash is the subjects of their respective exegeses. While Midrash is focused on "exporting the possible implications of the ambiguous parts of the [biblical] canon,"¹⁸³ the Ḥabad corpus is engaged in doing the same for a much-expanded canon, comprehending not only the Bible, but Talmud, Midrash itself, the kabbalistic writings, and many other later works of Jewish scholarship. Nevertheless, I would submit that Ḥabad thought retains an especial affinity for the area of Midrash, as a subject for consideration, as a hermeneutical prototype, and as a shared "domain of problems."

It seems unlikely to me that Idel is entirely off the mark in his analysis, and he has made a compelling case for the coincidence of and correlation between theological interests and predetermined interpretation of the canon. However, as I will now argue, this account of the nature of Midrash misinterprets the relationship between a fluid hermeneutic and the circumvention of theological interests. To begin with, there are clearly fixed positions both implicit and explicit in the rabbinic material, such as the belief in the resurrection of the dead (b*Sanhedrin*, 90b ff.), the notion that preserving life overrides the observance of the Sabbath (*Mekhilta*, 31:13), or the essential acknowledgement of an Oral Torah.¹⁸⁴ These, if not directly addressing the divine nature, do place constrictions on what the text can be allowed to mean. They are certainly preconceived opinions held by the rabbis, that are imported, by hook or by crook, into the Bible and its worldview. Particularly, the notion of an Oral Torah (whether or not explicitly identified as such) that is the basis for the Rabbinic project, is precisely the importation of extra-biblical concerns into the understanding of the texts! Furthermore, there are any number of teachings regarding G-d and the divine realm, some in fact quite close to the *Hekhalot*

¹⁸⁰ Idel, *ibid*, 55.

¹⁸¹ See regarding psychologization in Kabbalah and in Hasidism, Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 227 ff.

¹⁸² Idel, "Midrashic versus Other Forms of Hermeneutics," 51. Although I've noted that this is a problematic formulation, I retain it here based on how I understand what Idel means, and use it in that sense of preserving the text as a text.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 52.

¹⁸⁴ See David Weiss Halivni, "From Midrash to Mishnah: Theological Repercussions and Further Clarifications of 'Chate'u Yisrael,'" in Fishbane, *The Midrashic Imagination*, 23-44. Halivni particularly addresses the theology of the notion of Oral Torah, laying out the shifts in and development of this concept and showing how a theological position on this question is fundamental to the activity of Midrash.

literature.¹⁸⁵ If Midrash (or, to state it more accurately, mainstream Rabbinic literature) can be designated as “non-theological,” it is primarily as a description of its form and presentation, rather than its method. Even when considering its content, there are moments when glimpses of a theology are evident.

To put this in other words, we should not think of Midrash as being unsystematic, but rather as not making its system explicit. If we were to attempt to piece together the facets of a Rabbinic theological system, we would be most successful by identifying what is not stated, meaning what is assumed as given. Any given issue raised by the Midrashic works will be presented in a multitude of voices and perspectives; however, there is always a point that is not questioned, which is also rarely if ever stated outright. To go back to the examples cited above, both the Talmud in Sanhedrin with regard to the resurrection and the Mekhilta with regard to the preservation of life overriding the Sabbath present a plethora of opinions as to how these notions might be derived from Scripture; yet there is no suggestion that there might be any argument with either of these positions. As such, the apparent correlation between un-theology and a fluid hermeneutic is more plausibly accounted for in one of the following two ways: Both the theology of avoiding theology and the hermeneutic of fluidity may be rhetorical-formal strategies of the Midrashic genre rather than being due to a true openness to any interpretation. These strategies are employed to express ideas that are nurtured at their base by a systematic outlook possessing some degree of fixity. Alternatively, we can conceive of the Midrashic hermeneutic as being the wellspring from which the Rabbinic theological positions are drawn. If we bear in mind that the Midrashic works are frozen moments of a continuous dialectic, in which the Scriptural texts are plumbed for meaning and the resulting exegeses then provide the lens with which to reread and interpret Scripture, it should not be as surprising that an ostensibly flexible approach to the text can coincide with ideological positions that are more or less fixed.

To continue following this line of thinking, the possibility is opened up that the theological works may also be working with implicit midrash. This is conceivable, at least in some instances, even where there is an identifiable extra-Scriptural origin to a theological position, e.g. neoplatonism or Aristotelianism; it is certainly plausible for the theologies Idel terms “theosophic,” those of the *Hekhalot* literature and *Sefer Yetsirah*. These philosophies arguably entered the Jewish intellectual field through a process of midrashization, i.e. by becoming part of the dialectic in which meaning is exported from Scripture, rather than being directly imposed on Scripture. (I will expand on what I mean by midrashization below.) Thus we can say that within Midrash there is an implicit theology, and within (some?) theological works there is implicit Midrash. What distinguishes them from one another is the quality that is foregrounded and emphasized. In Midrash, indebtedness to the canon is of primary significance; in the theological works, the foremost objective is accurate gnosis.

In the case of the Ḥabad texts it may be argued that the relation to the canon is an essential part of the gnosis it wishes to convey. The form, content, and *sitz im leben* of the production of Ḥabad discourses all point to their representing a kind of knowledge that transcends the academic, but which understands itself to embody a direct, sensational experience of the subjects they treat. In this respect they are more akin to the Midrashic productions than to

¹⁸⁵ See Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965).

the theological works, as I will argue below. As such, the fluidity and export-orientedness of classical Midrash is retained in the Ḥabad writings.

What emerges from the foregoing excursus is that the “midrashic” qualities of classical Midrash, its focus on the semantic and syntactical, its ability to produce unexpected results, and above all its orientation of exporting meaning from the canonical text rather than importing meaning into it, are themselves not “fated” givens, but deliberate rhetorical choices on the parts of the Midrashic authors. The decision to employ the characteristically Midrashic format stems from a theological position held by the midrashists and shared by the Ḥabad masters; by presenting their ideas as a response to what the Scriptures themselves are “calling for,” the teachings of the rabbis become the perpetuation of the Voice of Authority contained within the Biblical texts. This, I will argue, is the overriding defining factor in Midrash; it is the hermeneutic lens provided by the Ḥabad tradition, and which in turn makes sense of that tradition as well.

Bosi legani

As noted earlier, the Ḥabad texts engage in a sustained preoccupation of drawing out Hasidic teachings from a broad canon that includes the Bible, as well as the Rabbinic teachings, the Kabbalistic works (especially the *Zohar* and the Lurianic writings), and the sermons of the earlier Hasidic masters within the Ḥabad lineage (in addition to other texts). This is accomplished by continually dipping into the canonical sea to extract teaching after teaching so that they illuminate one another, and thus come together to form a novel idea, creating the “interspersal” effect noted by Idel in the case of Midrash, a hermeneutic “that explores the significance of an obscure, controversial text by means of another... text.”¹⁸⁶

An excursus on an exemplary teaching will allow us to develop a description of the exegetical process at play in these texts, and to identify the presence of the properties ascribed to them above. The teaching, chosen from the *hemshekh* of *Bosi legani*, is particularly apt, as it engages an actual Midrashic passage as well the writings of the Ḥabad rebbes, thus affording us a view of the teaching’s hermeneutic perspective on Midrash itself, as well as allowing us to observe the employment of this hermeneutic in the probing of the Midrashic passage in turn. The passage I refer to is the seventh rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel’s, interpretation of the words “*iqar shekhinah*,” as he elaborates in the *Bosi legani* discourses of 5711 (1951) and 5731 (1971).¹⁸⁷

The *Bati le-ganni* Midrash

The *Bosi legani* discourses discuss a Midrash interpreting Song of Songs, 5:1: ‘I have come to my garden, my sister, the bride; I have gathered my myrrh and my incense, I have eaten

¹⁸⁶ Idel, *ibid*, 52.

¹⁸⁷ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 6-15 and 20-36.

my cane and my honey, I have drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, friends; drink and become drunk, beloved ones.¹⁸⁸

The Midrash in Song of Songs Rabbah on this verse (5:1) that is addressed in the discourses (henceforth the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash) bears citing at some length.¹⁸⁹

I have come to my garden: R. Menahem, son-in-law of R. 'El'azar bar 'Abuna, in the name of R. Shim'on b. R. Yosna: It is not here written "*bati le-gan* (I have come to the garden)," but "*le-ganni* (to my garden)"; to my bridal canopy (*ginuni*), to the place that was my primary [one] originally. Was not the primary [abode of] the divine presence (*shekhinah*) below?

Thus it is written, 'They heard the sound of the L-rd G-d going about in the garden' (Gen. 3:8). R. 'Abba said: It is not here written *me-halekh* (*pi'el* form), but *mit-halekh* (*hitpa'el* form); he was springing and ascending, springing and ascending.

The First Man sinned, and the *shekhinah* departed from the earth to the first heaven; Cain sinned, and it departed to the second heaven; Enos sinned, and it departed to the third heaven; the generation of the Deluge sinned, and it departed to the fourth heaven; the generation of the Tower sinned, and it departed to the fifth heaven; the people of Sodom sinned, and it departed to the sixth heaven; the Egyptians of Abraham's day sinned, and it departed to the seventh heaven.

Correspondingly, seven saints arose who brought it down to earth. Abraham was meritorious, and he brought it down from the seventh [heaven] to the sixth; Isaac arose, and brought it down from the sixth [heaven] to the fifth; Jacob arose and brought it down from the fifth [heaven] to the fourth; Levi arose and brought it down from the fourth [heaven] to the third; Kehoth arose and brought it down from the third [heaven] to the second; Amram arose and brought it down from the second [heaven] to one, that is the first; Moses arose and brought it down to earth.

R. Yisḥaq said: Thus it is written, 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and shall dwell (*we-yishkenu*) eternally upon it' (Ps. 37:29). What would the wicked do; remain suspended in the air? Rather, they did not cause the *shekhinah* to dwell upon the earth. However, the righteous did cause the *shekhinah* to dwell upon the earth. Why do "the righteous inherit the land?" [Because] "they dwell eternally upon it"; they cause the *shekhinah* to dwell on earth, 'he who dwells eternally, holy is his name' (Is. 57:15).

When did the *shekhinah* dwell upon it? On the day the Tabernacle was erected; as it says, 'It was, on the day that Moses concluded the erection of the tabernacle' (Num. 7:1).

This Midrashic passage is cited, in abridge

d form, in *Bosi legani*. As is typical of Midrashic units, the verse is only partially cited at the outset, although it is interpreted in its entirety. The final segment cited here referring to the

¹⁸⁸ See Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch, *The Song of Songs: The World's First Great Love Poem* (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), 81 and 179 for another reading. I chose this interpretation as it is the understanding of the Midrash (see end of present passage) and of the Hasidic masters (see, e.g. Schneur Zalman, *Liqute torah, Va-yiqra*, 15c; but compare *ibid*, *Shir ha-shirim*, 32c where the reading is more ambiguous).

¹⁸⁹ I am using the Vilna, Romm edition. See Loewenthal's discussion of the sources for this citation in "Midrash in Habad Hasidism" in *Midrash Unbound*, 429-56.

erecting of the tabernacle leads into the subsequent passages of the unit which interpret the second half of the verse (“I have gathered my myrrh and my incense etc.”) as referring to the sacrifices brought in it.

The first exposition of the Midrash focuses on the word *le-ganni* as its point of departure. Aside from its obvious definition as “garden,” the midrashists relate it to the Aramaic *ginun*, a bridal canopy or chamber.¹⁹⁰ This interpretation may be permitted by the *dagesh*, the diacritical mark, in the letter *nun* of *le-ganni* (represented here by the double *n*), enabling the word to be read *le-ginuni*. The commentary *Yefeh qol* by R. Shemu’el Yaffe Ashkenazi attributes the Midrashic motivation to the possessive form of the word, indicating that the object is something exclusive to “me,” namely a bridal chamber, unlike a garden which is accessible to all. *Yefeh qol*’s reading points to the logic underlying the Midrash’s apparently semantic observation. The first-person possessive indicates that the verse refers to an intimate setting. The same is true more broadly speaking, in that the word *ganni* is ultimately a metaphor for the congress of lovers.¹⁹¹ Thus the Midrashic interpretation can be seen to be taking its cues from the internal logic of the verse it is explicating.

Having established that the verse in Song of Songs refers to a (divine) return to the wedding canopy, the Midrash amplifies this by saying that this is “the place that was my primary [one] originally”; it then asks rhetorically, “Was not the primary [abode of] the *shekhinah* below?” Notice, for a moment, the bracketed words. I am translating the Hebrew words ‘*iqari* (my primary [one]) and ‘*iqar shekhinah* (the primary [abode of] the *shekhinah*). The Hebrew omits the object of the modifier “primary.” This is not grammatically problematic in Hebrew, especially since here the clause initially refers to “the place” that was primary, so that it need not reiterate the object going forward. However, it is precisely this “anomaly” that serves as the pretext for the Rebbe’s interpretation, which reads ‘*iqar* as modifying the word *shekhinah* itself. To make sense of this let us first examine one other Midrashic passage (henceforth the *Dirah be-tahtonim* Midrash) and some of the relevant Ḥabad teachings about it.

The *Dirah Be-tahtonim* Midrash

The Midrash *Tanḥuma* [*Be-ḥuqotay*, 3] states:

‘I will place my dwelling among you’ (Lev. 26:11): If you fulfill my commandments, I will set aside the upper realms and I will descend to abide among you; as it says, ‘And I will abide among the Israelites’ (Ex. 29:45). It was upon this stipulation that they left Egypt, that they make a Tabernacle so that the *shekhinah* dwell among them; as it says, ‘They will know that I am the L-rd their G-d, who brought them out of Egypt so that I dwell among them’ (ibid, 29:46). If they do my will, my *shekhinah* will not move from among them. Why? Said R. ’Ami: The Holy One craved, just as he has an abode above, that he likewise have an abode below.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, 2nd ed. (Ramat Gan & Baltimore: Bar Ilan University Press & Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 133.

¹⁹¹ See Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 14, et passim.

¹⁹² Buber ed., ibid, 5; ibid, *Naso*, 16 (Buber ed., ibid, 24); Numbers Rabbah, 13:6.

This passage is associated with the earlier Midrash (in another *Tanhuma* passage both teachings are cited contiguously, while in Numbers Rabbah they are found in proximity to one another¹⁹³). It similarly construes the erecting of the Tabernacle as the consummation of deep-seated longing of the Holy One to have an abode on earth. In the teaching of R. Schneur Zalman of Lyady, this almost throwaway remark looms large as a fundamental pillar of his outlook.

R. Schneur Zalman – The Purpose of Creation

In his magnum opus *Tanya*, R. Schneur Zalman writes¹⁹⁴:

Now it is known what our sages say, that the purpose of the creation of this world is that “the Holy One longed to have a dwelling below” ... Now the purpose of the gradual descent of the worlds from level to level is not for the sake of the upper worlds, since for them it is a descent from the light of his face. Rather, the purpose is this nether world. For so it arose in his will, that it bring about gratification before him when “the Other Side is subjugated,” and “darkness is transformed to light”...¹⁹⁵

For R. Schneur Zalman, the “longing for a dwelling below” is not merely part of an enthusiastic encomium of the Tabernacle but is “the purpose of the creation of this world.” This reading as well is not unwarranted by the Midrashim it alludes to; phrases such as “at the moment that the Holy One created the world, he desired etc.” and “while the Holy One was yet alone in his world, he desired etc.” appear in some versions of this Midrash. Once the goal of having a “dwelling below” is construed as the purpose of creation, the possibility is opened for R. Schneur Zalman to construct a *Weltanschauung* that shifts the religious focus from aspirations to transcend the material plane to an objective of illuminating the nether realm, one that is predicated upon what is unique about “below.”¹⁹⁶

R. Shalom Dovber – The Desire of the Essence

R. Schneur Zalman’s focus on the Midrashic notion of a “longing for a dwelling below” is foregrounded a century later by the fifth rebbe, R. Shalom Dovber (Rashab) of Lubavitch. In contrast to earlier Kabbalistic writings which construe the purpose of creation as being “so that the [creations] come to know [G-d]” or “so that the perfection of [G-d’s] powers and functions become manifest,” Rashab himself asserts that “we cannot say that [these reasons] represent the primary intent... Rather, [creation] is due only to the [divine] longing... We do not know any rational reason for his desire... As our rabbi [Schneur Zalman] said, ‘one cannot question a

¹⁹³ A version of the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash is given in Numbers Rabbah 13:2.

¹⁹⁴ For many of the concepts in the following passages, see Jacob Immanuel Schochet, *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism: An Introduction to Kabbalistic Concepts and Doctrines*, 3rd revised ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1988). See also Ch Bittul, “Key Terms.”

¹⁹⁵ Translations are mine. Cf. Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” 164-66.

¹⁹⁶ See at length Faitel Levin, *Heaven on Earth: Reflections on the Theology of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2002) regarding this idea in R. Schneur Zalman, and R. Menachem Mendel’s revolutionizing of it. Wolfson’s subtle understanding of what is meant by this construct in *Open Secret*, 87 ff, requires a sustained parsing in its own right.

craving (*oyf a tayve iz keyn kashe*).”¹⁹⁷ Rashab emphasizes that the divine motivation for creation must be inscrutable, rather than being impelled by some need, for necessity is always external to the one it drives, and the divine essence is not influenced by externalities. Only the Midrashic justification of “longing,” something which cannot be questioned (“why is it necessary?”) is adequate in this regard.

Rashab also glosses R. Schneur Zalman’s remarks that the ultimate purpose of creation may be adduced specifically from this Midrash because for the upper worlds “[creation] is a descent from the light of [G-d’s] face.” According to Rashab, a state of manifestation is always inferior to a pre-manifestation state; a light, power, thought etc. is always more pristine prior to being emanated or expressed, and is perforce dimmed in the process of its expression. Furthermore, the divine essence would not be moved by the possibility of revelation; to the essence, a state of disclosure is of no greater value than a state of latent potentiality. This is the meaning of R. Schneur Zalman’s locution that “the gradual descent of the worlds from level to level... is a descent” for the “upper worlds,” and that therefore “the purpose is [achieved by the creation of] this nether world [where] ‘the Other Side is subjugated,’ and ‘darkness is transformed to light.’” Only a non-rational “desire (*tayve*)” could warrant the operations of the divine essence.¹⁹⁸ In this way, several lines of *Tanya* become the subject of extensive meditation by Rashab.

R. Menachem Mendel – The Primary *Shekhinah*

Turning now to the expositions of R. Menachem Mendel (the Rebbe), the very first Hasidic teaching orated by him as rebbe contained an extended meditation on the words ‘*iqar shekhinah*’ from the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash¹⁹⁹:

To understand the implications of the phraseology ‘*iqar shekhinah*... This means that the *shekhinah* that was [originally] manifest “below” [at the time of creation] does not refer to the *shekhinah* as it is vis-à-vis *Atsiles* (‘*Ašilut*)’²⁰⁰... nor as it is vis-à-vis the infinite light... but the core and internality of the *shekhinah* resided especially below... The reference is to the [divine] light that transcends the worlds, ‘*iqar shekhinah*.’²⁰¹

The word *shekhinah* originates in the classical rabbinic writings as a term to denote the divine presence.²⁰² It is described as “resting” or “dwelling” (*shokhen*) in certain places or upon certain individuals. *Shekhinah* is roughly identified with the deity itself; “the *shekhina* in rabbinic

¹⁹⁷ S.D. Schneersohn, *Yom tov shel Rosh Ha-shanah* – 5666, 4th edition (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1991), 6.

¹⁹⁸ S.D. Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim* – 5678, 4th edition (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2003), 112 ff.

¹⁹⁹ Translations are mine. Cf. Y. Schneersohn, “Basi L’Gani,” trans. Uri Kaploun, Chabad.org, accessed December 16, 2021, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/115093/jewish/Basi-LGani.htm.

²⁰⁰ See Ch Bittul “Key Terms” for elaboration on kabbalistic cosmology. Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*.

²⁰¹ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 6-7.

²⁰² See Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Israel Abrahams, trans. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975), 37 ff. (note esp. 51 ff.). On the development of the concept of *Shekhinah* in the medieval era, see Daniel Abrams, “The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead,” in *The Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 3 (July, 1994), 291-321, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1509807>.

literature is nothing more than the figurative way of expressing God’s presence”.²⁰³ Among medieval Jewish thinkers, the question of the relation of the *shekhinah* to the divine person was raised and pondered. Was it indeed identical with G-d, an attribute of G-d, or a created entity (ibid, 298 ff.)? The Kabbalists identify the *Shekhinah* with the tenth and final Sefirah, divine attribute, of *malkhut* (sovereignty).²⁰⁴ Like the other Sefirot discussed by the Kabbalists, it thus occupies a position somewhere between the divine essence and a created being²⁰⁵; it is not distinct from the deity, while also not coterminous with it.²⁰⁶ As an entity which undergoes various states and experiences, occupying a position within each spiritual “world” or plane, it is possible to speak of various “levels” within the *shekhinah* itself.

Following the logic of the Midrash through the conceptions of the kabbalists, *shekhinah* qua *malkhut* finding its primary home below implicitly relegates the upper Sefirot to realms that transcend the nether. Here, however, the Rebbe identifies several different levels at which *shekhinah* is spoken of within the Ḥabad corpus: “the *shekhinah* as it is vis-à-vis *Atsiles*,” i.e. the standard conception of the place of the *shekhinah* within the highest of four worlds called *’Ašilut* (emanation), which is a pre-creation realm thought of as “divinity” in Ḥabad works. Beyond *’Ašilut* there is the primordial “infinite light” that necessitated a *šimšum* (concealment and condensation) to allow for the existence of “worlds.” Here, too, it is possible to speak of *shekhinah* as the final stage before the *šimšum*. Finally there is “the core and internality of the *shekhinah*,” *shekhinah* as it exists within the divine essence that transcends the extension that is “light.” It is specifically this latter instantiation of *shekhinah* that the Rebbe identifies as “transcend[ing] all worlds” and as the referent of the term *’iqar shekhinah*.

In 5731 (1971), when the Rebbe revisited the first chapter of *Bosi legani* for the second time, he expanded on the significance of *’iqar shekhinah*, differentiating between “mere *shekhinah* (*shekhinah stam*)” and “primary *shekhinah* (*’iqar shekhinah*).”:

The Midrash’s statement that *’iqar shekhinah* was below [implies] that the level of *shekhinah* that resided below was (not merely the *shekhinah*, but) *’iqar shekhinah*. The topics of (the first chapter of) the discourse represent an elucidation of [this matter]... The [Zoharic] notion that the [level of divinity] drawn down via the service of *it-kafya* (subjugation of the “other side”) and *it-hapkha* (transformation of darkness) is the divine light that pervades all worlds equally illuminates the expression “*’iqar shekhinah* was below”... for [this] indicates the divine light that transcends the worlds.²⁰⁷

The Rebbe thus equates the “primary *shekhinah*” with “the divine light that pervades all worlds equally” and with “the divine light that transcends the worlds.” Continuing to set out his argument, the Rebbe asserts that his reading can also be inferred from the expression “he desired etc. a dwelling below.”²⁰⁸ I will not lay out how this is explained here. Pertinent to our discussion, however, is the fact that the Rebbe uses this link with the *Dirah be-tahtonim* Midrash to parse the words (quoted below) of his predecessor, the sixth rebbe, to the effect that “he desired a dwelling below” illuminates the concept that “the primary *shekhinah* was below”;

²⁰³ Abrams, “The Boundaries,” 299.

²⁰⁴ Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 95.

²⁰⁵ Abrams, “The Boundaries,” 305.

²⁰⁶ Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 115.

²⁰⁷ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 22.

²⁰⁸ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 22 ff.

“based on [the above explanation] we may elucidate what is written in [Rayyats’s] discourse that ‘the reason the primary *shekhinah* was below was since the Holy One desired to have a dwelling below.’”²⁰⁹ The two Midrashim complement each other, as I have suggested earlier.

As noted, the Rebbe’s arguably creative interpretation of *‘iqar shekhinah* may be contraindicated on both syntactical and grammatical levels. However, careful consideration of the Midrash itself, as well as the words of his predecessors, makes evident that this insight is an entirely warranted interpretation of the term as used in all of these texts.

Warrants for the Interpretation

Let us work our way backward from the words of Rayyats in his *Bosi legani*. The words *‘iqar shekhinah* are not parsed in his discourse, save for one line with which he embarks upon his disquisition on the themes he treats therein:

This is [the meaning of] ‘I have come to my garden’... for ‘*‘iqar shekhinah* was below.’ The idea: The ultimate purpose of the creation of the worlds was that ‘the Holy One desired to have himself a dwelling below.’²¹⁰

In expanding on what this “desire” is towards, Rayyats elaborates that it consists of “divinity becoming manifest below” via human service to the divine. This divine service is encapsulated in the Zoharic paraphrase: “When the Other Side is subjugated, the glory of the Holy One rises up throughout all the worlds.” *Bosi legani* offers the interpretation that this means the disclosure of a “light that pervades all worlds equally” within reality.²¹¹ Throughout the set (*hemshekh*) of Rayyats’s *Bosi legani* discourses this locution recurs, with the discussion centering on the mechanics of the drawing down (*hamshakhah*) of the *shekhinah* below, and on its dynamics.

In a footnote to Rayyats’s discourse, the Rebbe cites a teaching of R. Schneur Zalman that the glory that “rises up” actually descends; however, it remains in a state of “exaltedness” (*romemut*).²¹² Rayyats’s citation of the Zoharic passage certainly was meant to invoke this thought as well, as is evident from the context. So the “light [that] pervades all worlds equally” connotes a light “beyond worlds,” transcending particular circumstances, referred to as *’or ha-sovev kol ‘almin* (a light that encompasses all worlds). This contrasts with a revelation whose nature varies according to the capacity of the given arena in which it becomes manifest, called *’or ha-memale kol ‘almin* (a light that fills all worlds). The *shekhinah-qua-malkhut* is usually identified with the latter type of revelation. The association of *shekhinah* in *Bosi legani* with the transcendent light indicates that we are referring to something beyond “mere” *shekhinah*.

It is the former type of divine light that is ostensibly to make its abode below. By implication, this was the original “*shekhinah* [that] was below.” Thus the equation of the light that “rises up (descends) throughout all the worlds (equally)” = “a dwelling for himself below” = “the primary *shekhinah* was below,” suggests that whether or not Rayyats thought of the words

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 24.

²¹⁰ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 4 (Arabic numerals).

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, 5 (Arabic numerals). See also *ibid*, 12-13.

'iqar shekhinah as translating to “the primary aspect of the *shekhinah*” per se, his use of the word *shekhinah* intended something akin to “core *shekhinah*.”

Considering the broader context of the *Bosi legani* discourse, a careful reading makes it clear that Rayyats is speaking of something beyond the usual understanding of *shekhinah*. The presence that departed and that must return is associated in the course of the *hemshekh* with the “light of the Infinite”,²¹³ the divine revelation anticipated in the messianic era,²¹⁴ the immutable nature of G-d,²¹⁵ the “infinite light that is higher and higher to no end,”²¹⁶ “a light that is concealed and impenetrable, that is not capable of manifestation and extension,”²¹⁷ and so forth. Ultimately it becomes apparent that nothing less than the manifestation of the divine essence itself is the subject here (as will presently be supported by the teachings of Rashab); it is indeed the essence that is at stake in the cosmic battle that he describes further on. *'Or ha-sovev*, then, is not merely a more exalted light, but the luminary itself; in the language of the discourses’ conclusion, *penimiyut ve-‘aşmiyut ‘ên sof* (the inner dimension and essence of the infinite one).

Bosi legani by Rayyats is based on a discourse of the same title by his father, Rashab, who proffers an identical equation.²¹⁸ Rashab’s teachings cited above presume a notion that he makes explicit within those same discussions, namely that the desire for a dwelling below, the network of concepts encapsulated in the phrase *dirah be-tahtonim*, is craved by the divine essence, and is to be occupied by the divine essence, therefore stipulating that what dwells below is not merely emanations or expressions of that essence. Thus the syllogism argues that the “glory of the Holy One that rises up” which is the “*shekhinah* [that] was below” that is to occupy the “dwelling below” is the divine essence.

Rashab’s meditations gloss the above-cited words of *Tanya* directly. Do the words of *Tanya* bear out this interpretation? *Tanya* (ibid) talks about the divine light being revealed, the “light of his countenance,” but the divine essence is the luminary beyond light. Does R. Schneur Zalman envision the essence becoming manifest on earth?

The rebbes themselves noted semantic evidence that the Midrash as cited by R. Schneur Zalman refers to the divine essence, such as that “the Holy One desired to have himself (*lo*) a dwelling (*dirah*),” meaning it is for the divine self (essence) rather than an attribute or the like. The desire is for a dwelling, similar to a human dwelling where one lives personally.²¹⁹ However, careful contextualization of R. Schneur Zalman’s own thought will lead to this conclusion as well. Elsewhere in *Tanya* a contrast is drawn between the existence in the “world-to-come,” where the souls “enjoy the ray of the *shekhinah*,” and the practice of the Torah’s commandments (in the present terrestrial existence); for

the Holy One, blessed be he, his glorious self (*bi-kevodo ube-‘aşmo*), no mind can grasp at all, save when it grasps and engages the Torah and its commandments; then it grasps

²¹³ Ibid, 20 (Arabic numerals).

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 29 ff (Arabic numerals).

²¹⁷ Ibid, 31 (Arabic numerals).

²¹⁸ S.D. Schneerson, *Sefer ha-ma‘amarim – 5658* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1998), 208 ff.

²¹⁹ See Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 23-24, and in the references (esp. fn26).

and engages the Holy One his glorious self, for “Torah and the Holy One are entirely one.”²²⁰

It follows, then, that the dynamic of fashioning the divine dwelling below via these self-same commandments would entail housing the divine essence.²²¹

The question of whether the Midrash regarding the divine desire for a dwelling below envisions an abode housing the divine essence may be moot, as the distinction between the divine essence and its attributes is not one typically made by Midrash.²²² To the extent that the rabbis do distinguish between “G-d” and “the *shekhinah*,” this Midrash in any case conflates the two, referring by turns to “I” and “my *shekhinah*.”

As noted above, the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash is directly associated with the *Dirah be-tahtonim* Midrash in at least one version, and they are found in proximity to one another in another version. Thus there is warrant aplenty to infer that the *shekhinah* that departed to the seventh heaven and was returned to earth by Moses was closely identified with the divine essence, or “an exalted level of *shekhinah*,” *iqar shekhinah*. But how might this be present in the verse of Song of Songs, 5:1?

We mentioned earlier that the character of *gan* (garden) in the Song is inherently polysemic. It is at once a garden, a place of relaxation; a private garden, a place of intimacy; and the female beloved herself. “A locked garden is my sister, bride” (Song of Songs, 4:12). The loci of the lovers’ intimacy in the Song vary from “my mother’s house” to the beloved’s bedroom, to fields and gardens. All of these settings share an attribute of exclusivity, where the lovers are to share the love that they reserve especially for one another (“there I will give my love to you” (Song of Songs, 7:13)). Certainly once these locations become metaphors for the beloved’s body and the presence of the lover there represents the act of love-making, these settings take on the characteristics of an exclusive and primary place, where one belongs, one’s home. As in the biblical verses themselves, the Midrash can justifiably be read as abbreviating “my primary place” and “my primary being” into a single polysemic word, *iqari*.

Ḥabad Discourses as Midrash

Let us now turn to the question of whether and in what ways the Rebbe’s disquisition on *iqar shekhinah* as it is found in *Bosi legani* is “midrashic.” The Rebbe, like any good midrashist, reads the sacred canonical text, in this case the phrase “*iqar shekhinah*” in Rayyats’s discourse, and probes it for its full implications. The canon before the Rebbe includes the Ḥabad Hasidic community’s sacred texts, namely the Hasidic writings of earlier generations; Kabbalistic texts, especially the Zohar; and especially, the classical rabbinic literature, in addition to the Bible.²²³ His method of exegesis is semantic, pivoting on the words *iqar shekhinah*, and interspersal, illuminating Rayyats’s discourse by recourse to other texts within the canon. The results produced by this reading are at once surprising, as *shekhinah* is interpreted in a way that departs from its most typical association with *malkhut* of *‘Ašilut*, while also completely consonant with

²²⁰ Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” 18.

²²¹ See also Schneur Zalman, *Torah or* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1990), 10b.

²²² See Urbach, *The Sages*, 63.

²²³ See Loewenthal, “Midrash,” 455.

the broader context of the teaching and with the Ḥabad tradition in which it is situated. The Rebbe's analysis can accurately be described as "exporting the possible implications of the ambiguous parts of the canon" (in Idel's phraseology), both at the level of the Ḥabad discourse as well as at the Midrashic level, unveiling new meaning within the Midrashic text itself.

The question of what motivated the Rebbe's interpretation, whether the semantics provoked the insight or whether an already formed theology was read into the text, has no immediate obvious answer, already suggesting that semantic attunement and defined theology need not stand in conflict. The Rebbe's discourse of 5711 (1951) had a clear, agenda-setting objective; it was his first discourse as rebbe, and explicitly laid out the direction of his tenure, which he termed "the seventh generation."²²⁴ It would be plausible to read the interpretation of *'iqar shekhinah* through the lens of this agenda. Certainly the identity of the *shekhinah* within Ḥabad thought, as within kabbalistic speculation, as well as the theory on the *telos* of creation inherited from R. Schneur Zalman are theological entities that are quite fixed. Yet, his exposition on these words produces a conclusion that is both not readily anticipated and by no means forced.

The coexistence of midrashic flexibility and the mark of theology in Ḥabad texts may appear to present a conundrum. Our suggestion that this can be accounted for by positing a process of midrashization of ideological positions with which the text might be approached must be expanded on. To do so, I will first discuss some of the insights proffered by Daniel Boyarin in his groundbreaking book, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, on the nature and method of Midrash.

The Reading in Midrash

Idel's description of Midrash as a hermeneutical struggle with the semantics of the biblical text is plainly right. Boyarin, who's characterization of Midrash may be summarized as a response to gaps in the Scriptural text, presents a similar idea that's further developed.²²⁵ Midrash is produced by a close reading of the Tanakh that is attuned to ambiguities and incongruities within its words, which beg for explanation.²²⁶ The Midrashists do not simply use the biblical texts as a jumping off point for their own concerns. The Midrashic solutions are likewise not arbitrary, but are prompted by indices within the text. Midrash is being practiced when scriptural exegesis remains tightly enmeshed within the scriptural text. The Midrashists are thus readers, noticing the anomalies in the text that call for explanation.

In defining the rabbis of the Midrash as readers, Boyarin is emphatic that this does not deny, nor is it counter indicated by their own, and distinct, *Weltanschauung*. Boyarin's thinking on how these two competing elements may be reconciled provide us with a way to move beyond Idel's dichotomy of theology and fluidity. In Boyarin's words:

Midrash is true reading of the meaning of the biblical text, a reading which is sensitive to literary values, echoes, contradictions, intertextuality in all of its senses within the Bible. Midrash is a reading of the "plain sense of things," but only if we recognize that the plain

²²⁴ See Ch. Intertextuality-All Sevenths are Beloved, esp. "Sources of Authority."

²²⁵ See Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 17, et passim.

²²⁶ See Rashi on Gen. 1:1, "this verse says nothing more than "*doresh* (apply Midrash to) me!"

sense grows and changes throughout history and that this is the Bible's underlying meaning... Midrash [is] the product of a disturbed exegetical sense, but only if we recognize that all exegetical senses are disturbed, including most certainly our own. All interpretation is filtered through consciousness, tradition, ideology, and the intertext... (Boyarin, 18-19)

Boyarin presents us with two apparently contradictory notions, that of being attuned to the "meaning" that emerges from the text and that of the inexorable pull which ideology exerts upon the interpreter, positioning them such that they are not incongruous in the first place. Every reader is created, in part, by preconceived positions which they bring to the text. Positionality does not diminish the possibility of being sensitive to the nuances and to the voice of the text, namely reading; furthermore, the reader's cultural context is the condition for engaging the text. Rather than trying to negate one's intellectual and cultural inclinations in the act of reading, the reader puts these in conversation with the text; "the midrash is not... a reflex of... ideology but a dialogue with the biblical text conditioned and allowed by that ideology." The rabbis read the biblical text in light of "the intertext provided by the canon itself," as well as "within the ideological intertextual code of the rabbinic culture,"²²⁷ and in the process reinterpret both the Bible and their ideology.²²⁸ This is no pretense of reading; it is actually "no different from any other interpretation."²²⁹

While Boyarin does not negate the distinction Idel makes between Midrashic focus on the elements of the text itself and theological interests, his perspective does show a way forward for conceiving of the coincidence of midrashicity and theology. For our purposes we can now suggest that while everyone brings their own biases and inclinations to the project of interpretation, one can still read honestly, using their particular lens to provide a coherent reading that is not at odds with the text's own internal logic. Taking Boyarin's line of thought a step further, we can posit that it is not the theological or fixed perspective of the interpreter that imposes a forced reading on the text, but on the contrary, it is a lack of interest in "reading" per se on the part of the theologically-oriented that engenders their predetermined results. The non-midrashic expositors focus on expressing their own thoughts and harmonizing them with, or at least not having them contradict, the canonical text. The midrashists, on the other hand, are bent on "reading" the text itself and hearing it speak. That is why their expositions have aspect of fluidity and their results are unexpected.

Indeed, Idel himself would likely agree with this characterization. He directly remarks that, for example, the early kabbalists "only rarely bothered with interpreting the canonic texts" (Idel, 54), and that earlier Jewish mystical texts characteristically disregarded the semantic aspects of the texts in favor of non-semantic approaches.²³⁰ The texts he adduces as examples of the non-midrashic genre, namely the *Hekhalot* texts, *Sefer Yetsirah*, medieval Jewish philosophical texts and many texts of the Kabbalah, all possess a common characteristic, namely that they are not commentative writings. Their central objective is not to dialogue with the canon, although inevitably they must in one way or another. However, Idel sees this as a result of their holding elaborated theologies; I contend, drawing on Boyarin, that the opposite is the case.

²²⁷ Boyarin, 17.

²²⁸ Ibid, 19.

²²⁹ Ibid, 17.

²³⁰ Idel, "Midrashic," 47 ff.

Because these texts are not reading, that is why the local concerns of the authors are foregrounded. Works which set reading as a priority will remain relatively flexible even given a comprehensive and elaborated theology, albeit one that cannot but be affected by its dialogue with the canon.

A kind of intermediating genre between the midrashic and the ideological is that of the *peshat* commentaries. Commentators such as Rashi,²³¹ Nahmanides, or ibn Ezra came to the text from a variety of perspectives and theological schools (kabbalistic, philosophical, etc.), and at times these theologies assert themselves overtly within their commentaries. Nevertheless, their glosses enjoy the versatility afforded by attunement to the canonical text because their primary format is that of dialogue with the text. The expression of their own ideological positions is of much more marginal import in their projects within these commentaries. In contrast, Maimonides' theological *Guide for the Perplexed* has no interest in commentary, and interprets verses of Scripture primarily for the sake of harmonizing them with his philosophical positions. He is therefore able to comment that were there irrefutable evidence to Aristotle's claims about an eternal universe, "the paths of interpretation are not closed to us... we could very well have interpreted the Scriptures and upheld the eternity of the universe."²³² On the other hand, when Maimonides does uphold the "straightforward meaning (*peshat*) of the Scriptures" he does so not due to their internal logic, but because "the eternity of the universe has not been proven, and therefore we should not reject [the straightforward meaning of] the Scriptures and interpret them for the sake of supporting an [unfounded] perspective." Maimonides' considerations are overwhelming ideological, and it is these that impinge on his understanding of the Scriptures themselves.

The exegetes of *peshat* are not quite midrashic due to other properties of their commentaries. To an important degree, they lack the interspersal element so prominent in Midrash's mode of interpretation, the strategy of deducing the meaning of one verse in light of another one, opting instead for a hermeneutic based on "language, syntactical structure, context, genre and literary structure, and in consideration of the mutual relationships between all these components," in the formulation of Sarah Kamin.²³³ Nevertheless, they fall within the parameters of the flexible, responsive category of interpretation, because they partake of what seems to me to be the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes the midrashic from the non-midrashic, namely an interest in reading.

In Idel's view, "a theology inclined to emphasizing the divine will... produced a much more open attitude to the text".²³⁴ Having reversed the sequence and having posited that fluidity is a product, rather than a cause, of a certain attitude to the text, we must ask, what ideology motivates reading as an end unto itself? Why do the readers read?

²³¹ Regarding Rashi's commentary, its relation to Midrash, and Rashi's own perspective, see Ivan G. Marcus, "Rashi's Choice: The Pentateuch Commentary as Rewritten Midrash," in Fishbane, *Midrash Unbound*, 233-247.

²³² Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2:25 (Qapah ed.).

²³³ Sarah Kamin, *Rashi's Exegetical Categorization in Respect to the Distinction Between Peshat and Derash* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), 14.

²³⁴ Idel, *ibid*, 53.

The Voice of Authority

The answer to this lies in the subject of the readers' consideration, the canon. A set of texts ascribed a central position within a given context is worthy of contemplation because of what it represents. In the instance of Midrash, what the canon represents is nothing less than the divine "Word."²³⁵ The Scriptural canon is the embodiment of the divine Voice of Authority; the practice of reading that canon in the manner discussed above enacts the perpetuation and re-presentation of that Voice of Authority. A theology that emphasizes and prioritizes this perpetuation is one that will value the project of reading.²³⁶ That this is the case for both Midrash and Ḥabad texts is evidenced by explicit statements to this effect within both genres, often identical (originally Midrashic) locutions used by both textual categories to reflect on their respective significances. Let us examine several examples from Midrashic as well as Ḥabad sources, to exemplify this point.

Commenting on the verse 'And G-d spoke all of these words, saying' (Ex. 20:1), which introduces the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus, the Midrash elaborates:

Said R. Yiṣḥaq: Whatever the prophets were destined to prophesy in each generation, they had received from Mt. Sinai... Not only did all the prophets receive their prophecy from Mt. Sinai, but so did the sages that were to arise in each generation each receive his own [insights] at Sinai; thus it says, 'These words did the L-rd speak to all your congregation [at the mountain from the midst of the fire, cloud and thick cloud, a great voice that did not end]' (Deut. 5:19). (Exodus Rabbah, 28:6)

R. Yiṣḥaq's teaching explicitly extends the ongoing Voice of Sinai to the words of "the sages," thus including the Midrashic enterprise within the continuing reverberation of the Sinaitic revelation.

More broadly, the notion of the Oral Torah assumes that the words of the sages originate with the divine word at Sinai, just as it presumes that the divine word speaks through the voices of the sages. The Mishnaic tractate Avot begins with "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders etc. to the men of the Great Assembly (*Kenesset ha-gedolah*)."²³⁷ This phrase can only refer to the Oral Torah, which was preserved by the elites, rather than the written texts of the Tanakh which were presumably made available to all. This sentiment is articulated in statements such as "Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and Rabbinic narratives, including even that which a veteran student will someday instruct before his master, was already said to Moses at Sinai" (*pPe'ah*, 2:4).²³⁷

Moving into the Ḥabad realm, Midrashic assertions such as "Any scholar who sits alone and reads Scripture and recites Mishnah... G-d sits opposite him and reads and recites with him" (*Yalqut Shim'oni*, Lam., 1034), and the above cited passage from Exodus Rabbah serve to develop teachings such as:

²³⁵ See James Kugel, "Ancient Biblical Interpretation and the Biblical Sage," in James Kugel, ed., *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15 ff.

²³⁶ While the *peshat* exegetes may not see their project as perpetuating the Voice of Authority per se, they see value in hearing that Voice directly (through *peshat*) rather than mediated by the interpretations of others.

²³⁷ See Halivni, "From Midrash to Mishnah," 27 ff., regarding the spectrum of views on the status of the teachings of the "*talmid vatik* (veteran student)."

It states regarding the Ten Commandments, ‘And the L-rd spoke all of these words, saying: I am [etc.]’ (Ex. 20:1-2)... [“Saying”] means to say and speak all the words of Torah, which were already said to Moses at Sinai; for all Scripture, Mishnah, laws and narratives were all stated to Moses at Sinai. Although the Talmud mentions the names of Mishnaic and Talmudic sages who stated this law... this is “G-d’s word – that is the *halakhah*” (b*Shabbat*, 138b) which was said to Moses at Sinai, that emerged from the mouth of that Mishnaic or Talmudic sage. This is the concept of ‘My words that I have placed in your mouth’ (Is. 59:21).

This power was given to Israel, such that the *halakhah* that emerges from their mouths is the literal “word of G-d” that was said to Moses at Sinai... “to say” that which was already said... The utterance, [when spoken] by the person, does not become distinct... as if it were one’s own, but rather as is stated, ‘Let my tongue respond with Your utterance’ (Ps. 119:172): the Torah is “Your utterance,” and “my tongue responds” like one who responds after another, [repeating] what they are saying.²³⁸

This passage by R. Schneur Zalman is but one example of a theme that is repeated and elaborated in numerous passages in his oeuvre, as well as in the thinking of the rebbes that succeeded him.

Similarly, interpreting the Talmudic teaching (b*Shabbat*, 105a) that the first word of the Ten Commandments, *’anokhi* (אֲנֹכִי, “I am”) is an acrostic for *’ana nafshi ketavit yehavit* (אֲנִי נָפְשִׁי כָתַבְתִּי יָהִיבִיתִי, I myself wrote it, I gave it), the Rebbe contends that “the divine essence himself wrote himself and gave himself away within” the Torah. Furthermore, this is true not only of the Ten Commandments, but also of all future developments of the ideas of the Torah by the “prophets and sages in each generation”; “all Torah matters as they are revealed in each generation remains the same ‘great voice’ (Deut. 5:19) of [Sinai]... that the divine essence speaks to each individual.” It is merely that there is a predestined time for each Torah concept to be revealed “from the voice of [Sinai].”²³⁹

With regard to the Hasidic context in particular, it is common to refer to the teachings of the Hasidic masters as *divrey eloykim khayim* (the words of the living G-d).²⁴⁰ This terminology is based on the Talmud’s locution in reference to the legal teachings of the Torah taught by the sages, “Both these [lenient opinions] and these [stringent opinions] are the words of the living G-d” (cf. b*Eruvin*, 13b). Hasidic exponents transformed this phrase into a virtual shorthand for the sermons delivered by the rebbes, often abbreviated as *dakh* (דַּחַךְ).²⁴¹ This descriptor shows up in R. Schneur Zalman’s foundational work of Ḥabad thought, the book of *Tanya*, where he refers to those who “[come] here to listen to *divrey eloykim khayim*”,²⁴² as well as in its “approbation by the rabbis, the sons of the consummately scholarly author,” where the *Tanya* itself is referred to as “the words of the living G-d [written] by our sainted father and master.”²⁴³ These examples, as well as additional passages that might be adduced, evidence the self-perception of both the

²³⁸ Schneur Zalman, *Torah or*, 67b

²³⁹ Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, 4:1093-94.

²⁴⁰ Cf Ch Background, “The Maymer.”

²⁴¹ Roth, *Ketsad likro*, 64. In fn18 he dates the term to the second Ḥabad generation, but this is belied by the citation from *Tanya* here.

²⁴² Jacob Immanuel Schochet, “Iggeret Hakodesh,” in Kehot Publication Society, *Tanya*, 408.

²⁴³ Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” xxii.

midrashists and the Hasidic masters as perpetuating the Voice of Authority within their teachings.

Thus a fixed theology is not inherently at odds with a fluid hermeneutic, as the latter is a consequence of the endeavor to read, and one can read even while holding definitive positions. The interpreter who is a reader finds value in hearing the voice of the text in and of itself, and not merely as a way of raising support for or questions against one idea or another. This approach results in a twofold consequence that distinguishes commentative texts from theological ones. The first is that in the crucible of the dialogue created by juxtaposing two equally compelling loci of value, that of the text that is read and that of the reader's opinions derived elsewhere, the two modify each other, the text being read in light of those opinions and the opinions being shaped by the text that is read.²⁴⁴ The second is that the mode in which the reader's ideologies are read into the text is that of midrashization, rather than harmonization. Harmonization, such as that alluded to in the citation from Maimonides above, entails the explaining away of incongruencies between the two authoritative sources so that they do not contradict one another. Midrashization finds the ideology already present in the text, alluded to in its own incongruities and anomalies, such that the text itself calls for being read into. Any "apparent" contradiction between text and opinion is thus obviated.

This process is evident, for example, in the presence of the myth of the Primeval Androgyne, known from Plato's *Symposium* and other ancient sources, in the Midrash (Gen. Rabbah, 8:1),²⁴⁵ which runs as follows:

R. Yoḥanan opened²⁴⁶: 'Aft and fore did you form me etc.' (Ps. 139:5) ... Said R. Jeremiah b. Elazar, "When the Holy One created the primeval *adam*, he created it androgynous; thus it is written, 'male and female created he them [and he blessed them, and called their name *adam* on the day he created them]' (Gen. 5:2)."

The myth is introduced into the biblical narrative by the rabbinic exponent of this Midrashic passage, derived presumably from the cultural discourse of ancient Palestine and the broader Hellenistic world. Nevertheless, it is not set down as at odds with the text, requiring a (potentially) forced reinterpretation of the Genesis passage so that it not conflict with accepted wisdom. Rather, it is introduced precisely to resolve an ambiguity within the biblical text. What is the meaning of a creation that is "aft and fore?" Did the Creator create humans as both male and female, as might be inferred from a (not overly) hyper-literal reading of the verse in Genesis? That these questions may have more obvious answers, indeed that they may be unwarranted altogether (at least from our perspective) is entirely beside the point; what is remarkable is that the verses are not interpreted to accommodate the myth, but rather the myth is presented to illuminate the verses. The myth of the Primeval Androgyne is midrashized into, not harmonized with, the canonical passages.

The result of this midrashization is that the myth, too, takes on a new shading from its Midrashic context. In Daniel Boyarin's view, the circulation of this myth among the ancients was

²⁴⁴ See Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 19.

²⁴⁵ See Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 35 ff, for a sustained comparative discussion of the function of this myth in a variety of texts, and the unique rabbinic perspective in its Midrashic version.

²⁴⁶ On the topic of the *petihta* (proem) form in Midrash, see Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), 100-22.

part of a discourse on the significance of the body and sexuality. While some expositors (including Jewish ones) used it and the Genesis story to idealize a spiritualized, celibate state for humanity, the rabbis read their sources as a celebration of marriage. “Palestinian midrash also knows and cites the myth of a primeval androgyne ... but it metamorphoses the meaning and virtually reverses the understanding of the myth.”²⁴⁷ Boyarin’s reading is certainly not the only possible one, however he does illustrate for us the consequences of the confrontation of canonical text and cultural ideology in the process of midrashization.

Midrash is itself an ideological move, a result of the privileging of the practice of reading as an inherently valuable activity, which in turn is generated by the endeavor to partake in the Voice from Sinai. But this claim requires further development. What are the dynamics of a text that reproduces the Voice of Authority embodied in the Bible? By what strategies does Midrash re-present the divine Voice, and how might the phenomenon of the Ḥabad discourses augment our appreciation of this mechanism? The key to assessing how texts amplify the voice of authority lies in the Ḥabad Hasidic concept of *biṭṭul* and its thematization within these texts.²⁴⁸ What *biṭṭul* is and how it is conceived in Ḥabad is the focus of the following segment of this chapter.

Self-Effacement and the Bridging of Worlds

Above, we have gleaned from Boyarin what to me seems to be the essential insight into the nature of Midrash, namely that it is first and foremost a practice of reading, a response to the gaps already present within the text and the filling of those gaps by recourse to other implications within the text. This provides a theoretical framework to account for what Moshe Idel has called the “interversal” nature of Midrash, its habit of illuminating one verse by appeal to another. Now let us return to Boyarin for two additional insights that go to the quality and texture of the Midrashic enterprise, which will provide us with an entry point into the question of the mechanics of how it purports to perpetuate the Voice of Authority.

The first is that Midrash expresses its perceptions as much through thematization and enactment as it does through explicit statement. Thus for example, the yoking together of contradictory opinions regarding the meaning of a Torah narrative reproduces an inherent ambiguity of the narrative itself.²⁴⁹ In discussing the ambiguity inherent in the biblical perspective on the Israelites’ sojourn through the desert, at times indicating a positive evaluation of it and at times a negative one, Boyarin notes that by presenting two sustained and antithetical readings of Exodus’s story of the descent of the manna within the *Mekhilta*, this Midrash “is, in effect, occupying the position of ... observing and commenting on the too single-minded resolutions of the text’s ambiguity ... Moreover ... it represents the tension and inner dialogue of the biblical narrative *by tension and inner dialogue of its own*.”²⁵⁰ The very format of the Midrash is a vehicle for expressing its insights into the text.

²⁴⁷ Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 42 ff.

²⁴⁸ See Ch Background, “The Unfolding of the Ḥabad Tradition”; Ch Insert-*Biṭṭul*.

²⁴⁹ Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 57 ff.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 79 (emphasis mine).

The second is that rather than the rabbis' interpretations being shaped by their lived realities, the reverse was often the case; the rabbinic perceptions of reality were colored by their insights into the meanings of the scriptures.²⁵¹ On the question of the confluence of historical reality and Midrashic ideology in the story of R. Akiva's death as a martyr, Boyarin observes: "Scarcely divorced from history, but even more connected with it than the historians have imagined, midrash is a way of reading and *living in* the text of the Bible, which had and has profound implications for the life of the reader ... R. Akiva is represented in the tradition as having died a martyr owing to his way of reading."²⁵² Midrash is only a textual hermeneutic as an initial step; it is ultimately much more. As Boyarin concludes his tract, "midrash reveals the inadequacy of any model of culture that divorces one way of making meaning [e.g. textual exegesis] from another [e.g. lived life]. The Torah read and lives lived are equally processes of making reality yield human meaning, and midrash subsumes them both."²⁵³ Both these insights share in common the depiction of Midrash as moving beyond detached hermeneutics to a *conatus* to live within the sacred sphere that the Bible represents, intellectually in the first instance, morally and empirically in the second, via the medium of its hermeneutics.

This phenomenon is markedly pronounced in the Ḥabad discourses. The principle element at play is the notion of *bittul*, a network of ideas relating to effacement; effacement of self, effacement of text, and effacement of the boundaries between text and self. By exploring this concept as it is present in Ḥabad thought, our insight into the workings of Midrash will be similarly enriched. In order to do so, let us first develop the second element of our key concept, that of intertextuality. We will define this term so that it is precise and useful, and survey how it operates within the Ḥabad texts. Following our discussion of intertextuality, we will be prepared to approach select passages of *Bosi legani* and to observe how their midrashic intertextuality serves to perpetuate the Voice of Authority.

²⁵¹ See esp. *ibid*, 117 ff.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 127-28 (emphasis mine).

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 129.

Chapter 4 – The Seventh: Being Intertextual

Kol ha-shevi 'in havivin – All Sevenths are Beloved

– Leviticus Rabbah, 29:11

My father-in-law the Rebbe explained (when he had just arrived in America) that even as the sevenths are beloved, the greatness of the first is prominent; for the seventh's stature is their being seventh to the first.

– *Bosi legani* – 5711

Intertextuality, as Daniel Boyarin has commented, signifies “that no texts... are organic, self-contained unities... Every text is ultimately dialogical in that it cannot but record traces of its contentions and doubling of earlier discourses.”²⁵⁴ As a condition of all texts, then, the utility of the term in speaking of a given text is not so much in noting the presence of such ties to other texts (they are invariably there), but in describing the tone and tenor of those references. What new light is cast upon the text by plumbing its relationship with its antecedent texts? To state more plainly, the significance of the phenomenon of intertextuality is not in its presence, but in the method the source text is invoked (allusion, citation, paraphrase, etc.) and in the tension created between it and the invoking text. As such, I am positing that the intertextual practices present within texts that may be deemed “midrashic” are distinctive.

In what follows we will probe the theoretical issues of intertextuality in general, seeking to hone the definition of this term so that it may be used with precision and utility. We will also account for the specific intertextual strategies employed by the proponents of the Habad thought system. We will examine statements made in both Midrash and in the work of R. Menachem Mendel for their explicit as well as implicit theorizing about the nature of their respective enterprises. We will interrogate the seventh rebbe's practice of laying bare the strata of an idea's development and what it uniquely suggests regarding his own efforts to engage in the midrashic project of perpetuating the Voice of Authority. Let us enter into this discussion by first examining one particular and telling instance of the Rebbe's intertextual method.

“All Sevenths are Beloved”

When, in his capacity as editor and publisher of his father-in-law's literary output, R. Menachem Mendel prepared the *Bosi legani* discourse for publication in January, 1950, he appended a notation to a parenthetical comment of Rayyats's within the text.²⁵⁵ Rayyats began *Bosi legani* by paraphrasing a Midrashic passage (which I refer to as the “*Bati le-ganni* Midrash” and will analyze in a further chapter) that refers to Moses' achievement of bringing the *Shekhinah* (divine presence) back down to earth, after the sinfulness of seven generations had

²⁵⁴ Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 14.

²⁵⁵ This facet of R. Menachem Mendel's work was expanded on Ch Background, “The Written Discourse.”

banished it to the seven heavens, and the virtuousness of six righteous individuals before him had progressively caused it to descend once again.²⁵⁶ In this context, Rayyats had interpolated the following comment: “[Moses] being the seventh (and all sevenths are beloved).”²⁵⁷ R. Menachem Mendel noted that the parenthetical phrase “all sevenths are beloved” was actually a citation from Leviticus Rabbah.²⁵⁸ Then, in a move whose import would only be fully appreciated much later, after the upheavals of Rayyats’s passing, the rise of R. Menachem Mendel to the seat of Ḥabad leadership, and the endowment of the *Bosi legani* discourse with new prominence and significance, the future seventh rebbe added the following reference: “See as well the end of [Rayyats’s discourse titled] *Hakhoydesh hazeh (Ha-ḥodesh ha-zeh) – 5700 (1940)*.” Through unpacking the history of this phrase and its references we will discover a moment of confluence of both literary and lived intertextuality that combines the notions of *biṭṭul* (self-abnegation, “self-dissolution in the Divine”) and creativity, tradition and innovation, and the midrashic objective of the perpetuation of the Voice of Authority.

We observed in the previous chapter how R. Menachem Mendel was delegated responsibility for the Ḥabad publishing efforts after his arrival in the United States in 1941. His duties in this capacity were comprehensive; in addition to preparing and publishing canonical Hasidic texts of the rebbes, R. Menachem Mendel also penned original compositions of his own, such as the Hasidic calendar *Ha-yom yom* in 1942, and an annotated and commentated Ḥabad Passover Haggadah in 1946.²⁵⁹ Even after accepting the leadership of Ḥabad in 1950, the Rebbe continued to concern himself with choosing and initiating publishing projects, and to varying extents even with editing and preparation of texts for print.²⁶⁰

Among R. Menachem Mendel’s publishing responsibilities was the annotation of his father-in-law’s discourses, as mentioned above. These were prepared for print both as complete books, as well as in individual booklets, especially the selected discourses of R. Yosef Yitskhok that were to be published in anticipation of holidays and the like. When R. Menachem Mendel prepared these publications, he would add, “at [his] father-in-law’s suggestion,”²⁶¹ references and brief comments. The *Bosi legani* discourses of winter 1950 were likewise prepared in this way, including the future rebbe’s annotations in the margins.²⁶²

The particular footnote under discussion consists of a reference to a Midrashic source for the notion that “all sevenths are beloved,” as well as a discourse of Rayyats in which this aphorism is elaborated upon. Presumably, the content of what Rayyats says there was of less

²⁵⁶ Chapter Language, “The *Bati le-ganni* Midrash.”

²⁵⁷ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:3 (Arabic numerals).

²⁵⁸ See epigraph of this chapter.

²⁵⁹ Kagan, *Hayom Yom*. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Haggadah shel Pesah im liquete ta’amim u-minhagim* (Kfar Chabad: Kehot Publication Society, 1996). See also preface to Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Mareh meqomot, hagahot ve-he’arot qetsarot le-Sefer shel Benonim* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2014), 8 (unpaginated) fns1-4, re: the preparation of that commentary.

²⁶⁰ For example, the preface to the first print in 1962 of Y. Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – quntresim*, vol. 1, (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1998), was written by R. Menachem Mendel as editor. In later years such prefaces were signed by the editorial team. This is a common phenomenon among the books printed in the first decades of the Rebbe’s leadership.

²⁶¹ Preface to first edition of *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – Yiddish* (1946).

²⁶² Leib Schapiro, “R’ Schapiro zichronos,” WhatsApp group, #452, relates that Rayyats referred to these annotations in the presence of the elder Hasid R. Shmuel Levitin as “the *maymer*,” implying that they were of the status of the *maymer* itself.

centrality; R. Menahem Mendel would have wished simply to refer the Hasidic reader to resources that would broaden their understanding of the phrase, and enrich their appreciation of the discourse at hand. However, the Rebbe's later treatment of this topic underscored the utmost relevance of both the parenthetical interpolation of Rayyats, as well as of the content of the discourse the Rebbe had referred to on the margin, to his own rebbehood and to the direction of the Ḥabad movement going forward.

The trajectory which culminated in the accession of R. Menachem Mendel to the helm of Ḥabad Hasidism began with his matrimonial ties with Rayyats's daughter, Haya Mushka. The significance of their wedding, including the collection of discourses that Rayyats delivered during the marriage celebrations, will be treated below at greater length. For the moment, I will note that the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash appears within those discourses, known as *Drushey khasene* (*Derushe ḥatunah*, discourses of the wedding), as well, in a more abbreviated form. A comparison of that citation with the Midrashic passage as it appears in *Bosi legani* will be illuminating. At the 1929 wedding, Rayyats said:

The world was created complete, meaning that manifestation of divinity shone in the world; as in the statement: The primary [abode] of the *Shekhinah* was in the nether realms. But on account of the sins of the generations, they caused the *Shekhinah* to depart, as it were, above the seven heavens, until Abraham arrived and brought it down to the first (sic) heaven etc. until Moses arrived (he being seventh from Abraham) and brought it down below.²⁶³

In this paraphrase of the Midrash, parenthetical mention is made of Moses' being "seventh" without further comment. In point of fact, the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash itself does not make mention of Moses' seventh-hood; it merely refers to him as the final in a line of seven saints who brought the *Shekhinah* back through the seven heavens down to earth. In the above discourse, Rayyats simply interjects an explanatory parenthesis: since Moses was the seventh saint after Abraham, it was he who facilitated the descent of the *Shekhinah*, which had initially fled to the seventh heaven, from the first heaven down to earth, thus completing the process begun by Abraham. There is no direct implication here that being seventh lends any color to the person in that position.

However, when this Midrash is returned to in the *Bosi legani* discourse, this passage is expressed thus:

There then arose seven saints who brought the *Shekhinah* down below; Abraham was worthy and brought the *Shekhinah* down from the seventh heaven to the sixth, Isaac from the sixth to the fifth, until Moses, who is seventh (and all sevenths are beloved) brought it down upon the earth.²⁶⁴

Here, two modifications may be noted: first, Moses' being seventh is no longer parenthetical, thus making it indistinguishable from the paraphrase of the Midrash itself (although the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash does not describe Moses as "seventh"); second, Rayyats adds the words "and all sevenths are beloved" (drawn from the Midrash in Leviticus Rabbah, where Moses' status as seventh is remarked on).

²⁶³ Schneerson, *Derushe hatunah*, 9-10.

²⁶⁴ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 3 (Arabic numerals).

By melding the notion of Moses' being *the* seventh with the Midrash about the saints who brought the *Shekhinah* back to earth, Rayyats offers a commentary on the latter teaching. Moses brought the *Shekhinah* back to earth not merely because it was already in the first heaven, but because he was "seventh." The significance of seventh as a status is illuminated in the parentheses, where the principle that "sevenths (in particular) are beloved" is invoked. Indeed, as becomes apparent from R. Menachem Mendel's note, this notion is also Midrashic, but it is Rayyats who links the two teachings. Yet, even as Rayyats updated his elucidation of Moses' power to attract the *Shekhinah* back to earth, there remains a conceptual nugget embedded in the original locution that might be overshadowed in *Bosi le-ganni*; that Moses' seventhness is vis-à-vis Abraham ("he being seventh from Abraham"). This is the aspect of "all sevenths are beloved" that was amplified in the discourse cited to in R. Menachem Mendel's reference, *Hakhoydesh hazeh – 5700*.²⁶⁵

In 5700 (1940), Rayyats taught:

"All sevenths are beloved" – the preeminence of the seventh is their being seventh from the first. Thus even regarding the distinction of being seventh, the first has primary status; meaning, the preeminence of the seventh is their being seventh from the first, hence here too, the first is foremost. Thus it is with regard to the forefathers, where the beloved seventh was Moses, who was seventh from Abraham... Notwithstanding the great and magnificent prestige of Moses, whom G-d elected as the first redeemer... the Midrash teaches "This is the meaning of the verse 'Do not stand in the place of the great' (Proverbs 25:6),"²⁶⁶ that he not equate himself with our forefather Abraham, for Abraham was the first to draw down the manifestation of divinity within the world through his efforts to publicize G-d's divinity to the world...²⁶⁷

This early treatment of the Midrashic notion that "all sevenths are beloved" is thus in a discourse in which the focus is in fact to underscore the value of the first in a way that downplays the distinction of being seventh. The reference to this discourse illuminates anew the parenthetical phrase in the wedding discourse that Moses was "seventh from Abraham." Moses was indeed ontologically seventh, but the significance of this distinction can only be correctly assessed when viewed in its relation to the first.

What are the stakes of the above discussion? And did the Rebbe actually intend to raise all these issues with his laconic note? One thing is certain: by the time the Rebbe "took office" formally on the eve of January 17, 1951, coinciding with Rayyats's first *yohrtsayt* (anniversary of passing), the question of the significance and position of the seventh was much more than an academic one. In his first *maymer khasides* (Hasidic discourse), the Rebbe expounded:

The affection for the seventh is not due to anything contingent on one's choice, will, or efforts, only by dint of the fact that they are seventh, which is an inborn quality... Now, my father-in-law the Rebbe explained (when he had just arrived in America) that even as

²⁶⁵ Note also the version in the discourse *Bosi legani – 5692* (1932) in Y. Schneersohn, *Quntreisim* 1:468.

²⁶⁶ Deuteronomy Rabbah, 2:7.

²⁶⁷ Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – 5699-5700* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2014), 29.

the sevenths are beloved, the greatness of the first is prominent; for the seventh's stature is their being seventh to the first.²⁶⁸

The stakes of this interpretation are made immediately clear:

Nevertheless, one must not delude oneself. One must know that “[we] cannot stand in the place of the great.” The entire eminence of the seventh is that they are seventh to the first, that they can bring the efforts and mission of the first to fruition... The favored status of the seventh is because it is they who draw down the *Shekhinah*, and furthermore, they draw down the primary *Shekhinah*²⁶⁹; moreover, they draw it down to the nether realms. Now, this is what is required of each and every one of us, who are the seventh generation, all sevenths being beloved...²⁷⁰

Here the implications of the discussion of the status of the seventh come into sharp focus: a correlation is being drawn between the seven generations of the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash and the seven generations of Ḥabad, with the Rebbe and his era paralleling that of Moses. The Rebbe is at once making a statement of great pretension and of self-effacement. He lays claim to a quasi-messianic role on the order of Moses', but he qualifies this prestige by crediting it to the labor and eminence of those who have gone before. I contend that we can take this display of humility at face value, for, as we will see, it is representative of the notion of *bittul* that lies at the heart of the Rebbe's overall perspective.

Thus we can see the Rebbe positioning himself in the new context of his role as leader of Ḥabad, where concepts such as “the seventh” have gained new and momentous significance, yet doing so by dipping back into the sources that are his heritage – the discourses of his wedding, the discourse of 1940, the *Bosi legani* discourses and his own pre-rebbehood note on it, adding next to nothing of his own. The Rebbe simultaneously adheres to the tradition he was given and creates something entirely novel with it. Below I will elaborate on the implications of the position adopted by R. Menachem Mendel on both the literary and psycho-sociological levels; for the moment, let us note the sources upon which he drew in this instance. These are: the discourses of his wedding, a discourse delivered by Rayyats “when he had just arrived in America,” *Bosi legani*, and R. Menachem Mendel's own note. I posit that the Rebbe had specific hermeneutic as well as ideological motives in turning to these particular founts of knowledge. My contention is that these represent a confluence of the factors that shaped R. Menachem Mendel's perception of his own rebbehood: his marriage to Rayyats's daughter and the trajectory arguably charted out for him in the discourses from that period; the campaigns of Rayyats as well as his own activities during the American era of Ḥabad; the ethical will embodied by *Bosi legani* providing direction to the Ḥabad community at large, and certainly to R. Menachem Mendel himself; and in particular, the fact of the incorporation of his own scholarship into the “manifestation of divinity” that is the Ḥabad discourse. As we will yet have occasion to unpack, the Rebbe's own voice is barely noticeable here, as he seems to merely repeat what his predecessors have said, and in doing so he makes certain quite fascinating and revolutionary

²⁶⁸ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 8.

²⁶⁹ More on this term and notion above in Ch. Language, “R. Menachem Mendel – The Primary *Shekhinah*.”

²⁷⁰ Schneerson, *ibid*, 9.

implications. Let us now turn to the issues of intertextuality, especially as present in Midrash and in Habad thought, and to their ideological implications.

Midrashic Intertextuality

Daniel Boyarin, in his groundbreaking book *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, proffers the following insights on the nature and method of Midrash and its intertextuality. He notes that this occurs not only within the words and phrases of the texts, but in the ways that Midrashic texts thematize their topics, such as through the recreation in a Midrashic passage of an ambiguity already inherent in the biblical text it comments upon, as well in Midrash's interaction with a cultural intertext, producing meaning at the lived social level. These notions which Boyarin identifies in Midrashic literature are enriched and expanded by observing the dynamics of the corpus of Habad discourses. The phenomenon of thematization as it occurs in Habad discourse goes beyond the level of the literary, as the texts thematize as well as enact the dual function of the discourse as both conveyer of content and participant in a dynamic. Over and above the text producing and being produced by cultural narratives, the very *hashpa'ah*, the flow of influence between rebbe and Hasidim as well as between the rebbes themselves is what produces, even as it is produced by, the texts. The lived reality of *hashpa'ah* is itself textual, so that the distinction between the metaphoric "vehicle" and "tenor" in the relationship between text and culture is dissolved.

The question of whether the kind of radical intertextuality as that which I have described in Habad teaching, and particularly in the Rebbe's, is operative in Midrash as well is worthy of consideration, but that is not my project at present. Rather, the more fundamental question to address at this point is, what theoretical framework might account for the inextricability of textual word from cultural reality? I propose the notion of "midrashic intertextuality" to describe the nature of texts that produce the kinds of concrete effects evident in both the Midrashic milieu and the world of Habad. In working out the specific characteristics that allow intertextual practices to be defined as "midrashic," the dynamics that shape the perpetuation of the Voice of Authority will come into view.

A Brief History of Intertextuality

What is intertextuality? How is the term more descriptive and more useful than simply saying "allusion?" Let us first survey how intertextuality is at play within texts, and then consider what the stakes of this notion are. We will begin by describing the mechanics of the allusive process. Ziva Ben-Porat has theorized a model for describing literary allusion, the phenomenon of one text evoking another in order to enrich its own meaning.²⁷¹ This is accomplished by the insertion of a recognizable marker, such as an anomalous word or phrase, in a given text, which is meant to call to mind an earlier, known text, and in this way meaning is imported from (part of) the evoked text into the alluding text. Along the same lines, Riffaterre speaks of an "interpretant," that "sign" (word, phrase, etc.) that clues us in to what the fullest meaning of a text is. Where this interpretant appears in a text, it is "ungrammatical"; "the

²⁷¹ Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL* 1, no. 1 (1976): 105-28.

surfacing of the interpretant in the text is ungrammatical at the level of meaning, but this ungrammaticality merely reflects the grammaticality of the latent text (or intertext) from which the significance derives...²⁷² Once the ungrammatical interpretant is recognized as belonging to a different system of meaning contained within another “text” that is only alluded to within the text being interpreted, in other words within an “intertext,” it is found to be absolutely grammatical *in its proper context*. It is through this recognition that the interpretant can become “correct” within the interpreted text as well, by modifying the latter’s meaning in light of the intertext.

Ben-Porat develops the possible ways the interpretant may affect the text in which it is embedded. According to Ben-Porat, the extent to which the referent text (RT) is meant to illuminate the alluding text (AT) varies along a continuum, from a local deepening of the reference up to and including the evocation of the entirety of the RT to revise the meaning of the entirety of the AT. At its maximum, the relation between two texts may be described as “metonymic,” which describes texts that are “initially related,” sharing “world components,” where “AT is in one form or another a continuation of RT.”²⁷³ Robert Alter dubs this kind of allusion “midrashic,” “remembering the tendency of the... Midrash to interpret Scripture by fleshing it out... Midrashic allusion is generated when one writer is under the spell of an earlier one, whether happily or not.”²⁷⁴

The Midrashic text does indeed share world components with the biblical; as another author has put it, they share the “same domain of problems”.²⁷⁵ Additionally, in evoking a snippet of Scripture it has, for all intents and purposes, evoked the entirety of Scripture; “each verse of the Bible is... connected to its most distant fellow.”²⁷⁶ Thus Midrash engages in fleshing out, and being fleshed out by, the Bible to the nth degree. It can be said that for an allusion to be fully midrashic, it will exhibit what Ben-Porat sees as a “probable” result of comprehensive allusion, namely the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the evoked text.²⁷⁷

It is very probable that the creation of intertextual patterns affects and enriches the evoked text (RT) as well. Even if the evoked text preceded the alluding text by several hundred years, a simultaneous activation is possible for the reader of both. Consequently, familiarity with the later text (AT) can change or modify the interpretation of the evoked text (RT) ... The problems involved in the legitimacy of manipulating such an ahistorical (and intentionally impossible) allusion in interpretation need not concern us here. (Ben-Porat, 114, fn9)

According to Joshua Levinson, that is exactly what Midrash does. Regarding the kind of Midrash he calls “exegetical narrative,” Levinson observes that “the reader [of the Midrashic rewriting of a Biblical story] not only interprets the midrashic narrative against the background of the biblical

²⁷² Michael Riffaterre, “Interpretation and Undecidability,” *New Literary History* 12, no. 2 (Winter, 1981) : 231, accessed July 26, 2021, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/468668>.

²⁷³ Ben-Porat, “Poetics,” 117.

²⁷⁴ Robert Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 132-33.

²⁷⁵ Idel, “Midrashic,” 52.

²⁷⁶ See James Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” *Prooftexts* 3, no. 2: 145, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20689066>.

²⁷⁷ See Ben-Porat, “Poetics,” 114 fn9.

story, but also reinterprets the biblical story against the background of the midrash.”²⁷⁸ It is not an overstatement to say that this obtains for all genres of Midrash; the Midrashic teaching is influenced consummately by the Biblical texts, and is simultaneously rereading them.

In summary, Midrash can be seen as employing consummate intertextuality, fully engaging with, absorbing, and even redefining its intertext. I will yet argue that this condition alone does not suffice to create what I am referring to with the term “midrashic intertextuality.” However, we should first give some space to the politics of intertextuality, as the evocation of an intertext is not a neutral or mechanical move. For this, a short genealogy of the notion is in order.

The term intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, initially signified an inevitable condition of texts: that they are constructed out of citations (witting or unwitting) of other texts.²⁷⁹ This idea stands in contrast to the older critical methods of source criticism, which say that belated text X is influenced by earlier (authoritative) text Y, and that by excavating a text’s sources we will have an adequate account of said text. Source criticism therefore privileges the earlier text as original and authoritative, while casting the later text as derivative.

Mikhail Bakhtin, writing in the early twentieth century, introduced notions of dialogism and heteroglossia in his accounts of literature, destabilizing the source-critical approach in two ways: He brought to light the derivative nature of all texts, including those we perceive as original. For Bakhtin, the only truly original utterance was that of Adam, but ever since, every utterance (both oral and written) was dialogical, a contested utterance that was born with the traces of earlier utterances already embedded within it. Thus any quest for original sources was futile from the outset. Furthermore, Bakhtin located the “sources of influence” of any text in all spheres, the marginal as well as the canonical. Thus source criticism erred not only in its premise of an urtext, but also in its methodology for finding it, seeking it in the texts of authority while overlooking the prosaic.²⁸⁰

Kristeva’s intertextuality further flattened any notion of hierarchy among texts, as it described the relations of texts to one another as simply that of a shared universe of ideas and phrases. No inferiority can be imputed to “belated” texts for drawing on or being derivative of “original” texts, given that those same originals are themselves inevitably composed of other texts. The question of direction of influence which plagues source criticism is therefore obviated, for if one is building a new building using old bricks, one does so because the bricks are available, not due to the significance of the building from which they derive. However, as Chana Kronfeld emphasizes, at the same time that Kristevan intertextuality levels the proverbial playing field of textuality into a vast “tissue of citations,” it also effectively closes the door on the

²⁷⁸ Joshua Levinson, “Dialogical Reading in the Rabbinic Exegetical Narrative,” in *Poetics Today*, 25, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 505.

²⁷⁹ The following draws on Chana Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 144 ff.

²⁸⁰ This issue is discussed at length in Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), accessed December 17 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central, 259-422.

question of what the significance of these intertextual moments might be. If citation and reproduction are inevitable, they are also agentless and without purpose.²⁸¹

Kronfeld seeks to redress the erasure of agency in intertextuality, in part by returning it to its earlier incarnation as Bakhtin's "intersubjectivity," emphasizing that cross-pollination between texts is performed by "poetic subjects," living agents who derive and transform ideas of other poetic subjects because they choose to be influenced by those subjects.²⁸² To follow the analogy above, the belated author not only uses the old bricks, but judiciously chooses which bricks to use, and responds to the significance of the older building. In this way, the intentionality of an author's citation is resurrected, even as the obviation of a hierarchy among texts achieved by Kristeva's intertextuality is preserved. From this perspective, examining the nature of an intertextual instance is apposite. It is a desideratum to probe the ways in which a given citation modifies it from its original context, and even how it comments on and freshly illuminates the earlier text. As noted above, the significance of intertextuality is not only that it is present, but how it is present.

In her analysis of this phenomenon in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai, Kronfeld defines intertextuality as the "space of agency" of the belated author. Rejecting Bloomian "anxiety of influence" as an inevitably operative factor in belated writing, Kronfeld emphasizes that the alternative to an oedipal struggle with a poetic father is not unequivocal submission to and subsumption within the early text. Rather, the belated author is able to consciously and voluntarily take a position vis-à-vis their predecessors, even if that position is one of being influenced and of acceptance.²⁸³ Citing Judith Butler, Kronfeld notes that even as "canonical cultural authority" works to "constitute, define, and confine the poetic subject," "the subject may leave herself the possibility... to reappropriate the texts of authority, to have a claim on them, and to repeat them *differently*." This subjective revision of the significance of the traditional texts constitutes the "space of agency."²⁸⁴ Here the belated author neither negates what preceded them, nor submits to it.

Thus in Kronfeld's view, the phenomenon of intertextuality doesn't prescribe an inevitably derivative nature to the belated text. On the contrary, it is precisely in the repetition of and variation on the early text that the belated author exercises their own agency and innovation.²⁸⁵ It is the belated author that chooses whether to accept or reject the earlier text, to treat it as relevant or irrelevant, doing so through such species of intertextuality as parody, irony, citation, allusion, literal or figurative interpretation, and so on.

²⁸¹ See Marko Juvan's discussion of implicit/explicit or general/specific intertextuality and their respective utility in Marko Juvan, *History and Poetics of Intertextuality*, trans. Timothy Pogacar (Purdue University Press, 2008), 44 ff.

²⁸² Kronfeld, *The Full Severity*, 148 ff, discusses the error in the notion of "influence." Note the quote from Baxandall that "if one says that X influenced Y it seems that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X," which he objects to on linguistic (as well as presumably moral) grounds (ibid). See also Kronfeld's analysis of the story related by poet Yehuda Amichai regarding his early poetic "influences," using the terminology of conqueror rather than conquered (ibid, 149 ff)..

²⁸³ See Kronfeld's discussion of Brodsky's valorization of "repeating someone else's lines," ibid, 160.

²⁸⁴ Kronfeld, *Full Severity*, 160-161.

²⁸⁵ See Meir Sternberg, "Proteus in Quotation-Land: Mimesis and the Forms of Reported Discourse," in *Poetics Today* 3, no. 2 (1982): 107-156, on the subtle shifts accomplished through repetition. See Marko Juvan, *History* 23 ff, on citation as an intertextual practice that may be employed to ironize etc.

Intertextuality, then, is a concept whose use exceeds describing the methods by which one text alludes to another or by which such allusions are made recognizable, as in Riffaterre and Ben-Porat; its proper function is in allowing us to identify the “tone” in which two texts relate to each other. Given the relevant markers within the alluding text and the accurate identification of the referent text, and given a robust description of the character of the allusion, what is the nature of the relationship between the two texts? Is it one of reverence, imitation, interpretation, parody, etc.? The meaning of a text, on this model, occurs between the text and its intertext, in the “space of agency.”

Boyarin describes the Rabbis as “strong readers,” people who are both reading a canonical text, while capable of approaching it creatively.²⁸⁶ This thinking on Midrash would also seem to align with the notion of “reappropriat[ing] the texts of authority, [having] a claim on them, and [repeating] them differently.” Nonetheless, we might assess the operations of the Rabbis somewhat differently. It is true that they do “make sense of the Bible for themselves and their times and in themselves and their times”²⁸⁷; but in so doing, they do not see themselves as departing from the true meaning and intent of the canonical biblical passages they interpret. The “space of agency” allows the author to assert their own identity, even as they are “confined” by the “canonical authority.” In the case of Midrash, it would seem that the creators of this genre wish to obscure their own presence and assert the very canonical authority they are (re)citing. Can they still be said to be repeating “*differently*,” at least insofar as they understand their own project? Granted that the exercise of Midrash results in wonderfully fresh and original material that can be strikingly different from the Biblical, and stands in contrast to, say, the efforts of the *peshat* method that strives to ascertain the “actual meaning” of the Scriptural verse²⁸⁸; even so, the Rabbis do not understand their project as deviating from the “original” intent of the Biblical text. Where do they assert their personal identity, and where do we hear their distinct voice? What are they saying, rather than repeating? In the case of the seventh rebbe’s repackaging of the legacy he received from his six predecessors, it is often difficult to notice anything beyond repetition of the “lines” of others; the question of his own originality is therefore even more pointed.

In fact, however, the Rebbe, as was the case for the Midrashic rabbis, does repeat “differently,” though not as we might expect. As I will show, by repeating (even) in the same tone, the voice of the repeater, be they midrashist or rebbe, becomes the voice of the canon. As such it becomes imbued with the authority embodied by the canon. Moreover, it is the repeater (and the repetition) that invests the canon with authority, an authority that can now ring forth in the voice of the repeater. This is the dynamic of the perpetuation of the Voice of Authority. The contribution of the belated author is in the designating of the location of the well of authority, and the pretense that they can make such a designation and partake of, or ventriloquize, that authority. Certainly there is originality (*hiddush*) in Midrash, and the same is true for the teachings of each of the rebbes of Ḥabad; however, what is perhaps more compelling than the novel thoughts they propound is what they are saying precisely where they hide themselves and

²⁸⁶ Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 16.

²⁸⁷ Boyarin, *ibid*, 14.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Sara Japhet, “The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology: From the *Peshat* to the *Derash* and Back,” in Fishbane and Weinberg, *Midrash Unbound*, 249-266.

foreground their respective canons. Those are the moments of intertextuality that are truly “midrashic.”

It is here that we arrive at what I contend is the defining characteristic of midrashic intertextuality: that the effect of midrashic reading is to efface the boundaries between the realities of the world of the referent text and that of the alluding text, its author, and its *Sitz im Leben*. So long as the alluding text upholds the barrier between it and the referent text, it will not be fully midrashic. Midrashicity in the sense of the effacement of boundaries is characteristic of many post-Rabbinic Judaic texts as well which continue to accept, to greater or lesser degrees, a coherent continuity between “then” and “now,” even as they allow for stark differences between them.

It is with modernity, both as an era and as a mode of thinking, that an insurmountable barrier between our present and the past is recognized. Pace Alter’s definition of “midrashic” as “one writer [being] under the spell of an earlier one, *whether happily or not* (emphasis mine),” I am arguing that resistance to the influence of the tradition results in a product that is precisely un-midrashic, regardless of its affinities with Midrash. It is only when the creator of the text actively seeks to reenact the realm of its predecessor text, through both repetition and innovation, that it is truly midrashic. This may be demonstrated by comparing the effects created by the texts of Midrash with those of the writing of the modern writer S.Y. Agnon.

Midrash and Agnon

Midrash achieves this effect of effacing boundaries through several rhetorical strategies. The rabbinic tendency toward retrojection is illustrative. The rabbis regularly impute (certain) realities of rabbinic life to earlier eras. The well-known statement that “Abraham observed the entire Torah before it was given” [b*Qiddushin*, 82b] is one example. I read this not only as a move to imagine the past in terms of their own times, but to make the past present within their own present. By ascribing Torah observance (specifically rabbinic Torah observance) to Abraham, the rabbis make Abraham and his context accessible to themselves. Abraham and his time are not conceived of as fundamentally *different* from that of the rabbis, but as fundamentally *alike*. Similarly, there are rhetorical strategies in rabbinic works that efface the boundary in the other direction, rendering the rabbinic present no different from the biblical past.

The foremost mode of re-presentation of the idealized biblical realm within the exilic rabbinic world is the endeavor of Midrash itself. The Midrash does not purport to be an independent text that is making use of biblical material (in the way, e.g., a *piyyut* might utilize biblical material to construct a new entity, a hymn, paeon, lament, etc.); rather it is reading Scripture, “fleshing out” and revealing Scripture’s own intent. Using terms such as *melamed* (“this [verse] teaches”) and *hada hu de-ketiv* (“thus it is written”), *maggid ha-katuv* (“Scripture tells [us]”), *amar rahmana* (“the Merciful One [G-d] says [in his Torah]”), and the like, the Midrashic teachings present themselves as merely filling in ellipses in the biblical texts. We do not hear the voices of the midrashists themselves; or better said, we hear their voices and assume them to be those of the biblical narrators.

A second related technique to that of filling in the gaps within the biblical text is the Midrashic use of anonymity. As in the Mishnah and the Talmud, the attributed teachings of the

Midrash are embedded within an anonymous textual fabric, a *stamma*.²⁸⁹ The redactor(s) of Midrash, whose anonymity precludes us from definitively identifying them or the era(s) in which they were active, create a dual effect of what I will characterize as ventriloquism. Note that I make no historical claims here regarding either the provenance nor the intended meanings of the attributed statements in Midrash, whether scriptural or rabbinic. My comments pertain to the literary effect of the anonymous strata of the Midrashic text. The redactor(s)'s anonymity obscures their presence, so that we, the readers, are left with the impression that we are hearing the unmediated voices of the named rabbis and of the Bible, thus of G-d. As a result, we do not notice the intrusion and intervention of the anonymous layers in shaping our contextualization and understanding of these attributed sources.

It should be noted that there is an anonymous element even to the named statements; this for a couple of reasons. For one, the attribution itself is done by the anonymous redactor(s) and cannot necessarily be accepted as reflective of the "actual" words of the referenced rabbi; we are not hearing the named rabbi, but the anonymous voice citing that rabbi. This is evident, in part, from the fact that many Midrashic statements are cited on various occasions in the names of different rabbis (as occurs in the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash itself!²⁹⁰), or may even be "cited" in one place and presented anonymously in another. Second, the authoritative force of the attributed statements does not derive (wholly) from the authority of its original articulator, but from its presence within the Midrashic corpus.²⁹¹ It is a statement by *a* rabbi (and by extension, "the Rabbis"), whether or not it was said by *this* rabbi. It is a *ma'amar* (statement of) *Razal* (an acronym for *rabbotenu zikhronam li-vrakhah*, "our rabbis of blessed memory," a standard appellation for the sages of the rabbinic era, circa first-sixth centuries, the sources of the teachings represented in the corpuses of both Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds and the Midrashic compilations). Thus the presence of an attribution in many instances is largely rhetorical. That this is so (again, without going to authorial intent, but observing its reception) is evidenced by the common habit of referring to what "the Midrash" says, rather than referring to the specific rabbinic master that articulated the statement (as is done in our discourses as well).²⁹²

As a result of the above strategy of anonymity, we, the readers, are induced to take the Midrashic passage as an unmediated representation of the Biblical text and the rabbinic comments and to overlook any slippage between the attributed Scriptural or rabbinic statements and the anonymous fabric. What we actually perceive is the voice(s) of the anonymous redactor(s), as they project their voice through the mouths of Scripture and the Rabbis. Thus the Midrashic material is characterized by ventriloquism.

²⁸⁹ A refinement on the idea of the *stamma* has been performed by Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 143 ff. See Zvi Septimus, "The Poetic Superstructure of the Babylonian Talmud and the Reader it Fashions" (doctoral dissertation, Graduate Theological Union and University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 3 ff; Septimus drives at what the anonymity within the Talmudic text conveys, and gives a nice summary of the idea of the *stamma*, while suggesting the notion of a Superstam. I am extending these ideas to Midrash and to the Ḥabad texts.

²⁹⁰ See references in Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:3 (Arabic numerals) fn4.

²⁹¹ But see Boyarin's discussion in *Intertextuality*, 57 ff, regarding ongoing debate between R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua, each following a respective line of thinking. Nevertheless I do not think that this negates what I am saying here, in part because the function of the anonymous layer of the text is to create a new theme out of their respective strands, as well as because the dictum that "these and these are the words of the Living G-d" (see above, Ch 3, "The Voice of Authority") compel us to take both opinions seriously at some level.

²⁹² See e.g. Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:13 (Arabic numerals).

What are the implications of these ventriloquistic strategies? Like the phenomenon of retrojection mentioned earlier, the property of ventriloquism in rabbinic texts similarly has the effect of equating past and present. Literarily and theologically, the rabbinic context has direct access to the realities of the prophetic, biblical period, and this despite acknowledged differences between them. (Moshe Idel's remark that the rabbis deal with the same "domain of problems" as the biblical writings can also be seen as touching on an aspect of this phenomenon.) I hasten to note that I do not claim that the rabbis do not recognize any distinction between them and their own times and those of the patriarchs and prophets of the Bible; there are ample examples to the contrary, chief among them the statement that "with the deaths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the [prophetic] holy spirit departed from Israel" [b*Sotah*, 48b]. Nevertheless, the rabbis endeavor mightily to create alternative avenues that will enable continued communion with the divine, and this characteristic is what defines their project, rather than resignation to irreparable loss.²⁹³

This perspective contrasts distinctly with the work of the great modern Hebrew writer, Shmuel Yosef (S.Y.) Agnon (1888-1970). Agnon was a modern writer in the full sense of the word.²⁹⁴ His writing, couched in the language of Jewish tradition, drew on and engaged the Western literary tradition and modern Hebrew literature. He felt himself an heir to the rabbinic tradition, but a fallen one. "As a modern author who could only imitate the language of the canon and could not enact its content as part of a living ritual, he could not be the true bearer of that canon."²⁹⁵ Formally, Agnon's works resemble the traditional Jewish ones, and at times he even creates "pseudo-midrash," midrashic passages that do not appear in any of the collections of midrash but are inventions of Agnon's, yet which can be almost entirely drawn from authentic sources. Additionally, his writing often deals with subjects of the same "world of concerns" as the Midrash, such as exile and redemption, the relationship between humanity and the divine, the sanctity of the Land of Israel, and so forth. Agnon's narratives are often interlaced with biblical verses and snippets of verses, which his narratives serve to comment upon. Overall, Jewish tradition, especially the Bible and classical rabbinic texts, is a ubiquitous presence in the work of Agnon. It may indeed be characterized as metonymically related to the tradition, in Ben-Porat's terms. Yet, we cannot consider it midrashic.

While Agnon gives us Midrashic form, it is precisely his content which prevents his intertextuality from standing in a midrashic orientation towards Jewish tradition. His writing embodies exactly what happens when Midrashic language is used without a sense of continuity, or even with a sense of discontinuity. In Shaked's words, "The traditional elements... indicate the significance of the rebellion against tradition that is implied through the use of these materials... Agnon's work is not... an interpretation of his sources... Rather, he attempted to understand their function after they had lost their validity in the new context..."²⁹⁶ At times, when Midrashic language is used by Agnon, the effect is "an absolute disorientation of the relation of the addressee to the traditional texts... He created an 'antitext' that appears to retain the traditional form, but the content has been replaced by high explosives."²⁹⁷ According to

²⁹³ See b*Bava Batra*, 12a, regarding the persistence of prophecy among the Talmudic Sages.

²⁹⁴ The following draws on Gershon Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 23 ff.

²⁹⁵ Shaked, *ibid*, 24.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 36-37.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 37.

Shaked, Agnon's filling of the forms of Jewish tradition with content derived from the European tradition creates an "anomalous combination [that] negates the religious content of the sources."²⁹⁸

The content of Agnon's work describes the modern world, populated with "people who pine to return to a certain place, but the gates of their destination have been locked because the world behind the gates has been destroyed."²⁹⁹ Like Agnon the man, his characters are denizens of modernity, suffering a bifurcation of identity between a lost world of innocence and a sense that the traditions are inadequate for the complexity of contemporary life. It is this that the intertextual enmeshment with the traditional sources in Agnon thematizes: the (ideal) reader is struck by the "gap between the balanced view and the disjointed contents."³⁰⁰ The rhetoric of the Talmudic sages is incongruous in the modern context, creating an ironic effect. In the terms of a "space of agency," Agnon's intertextuality alerts us to the contrast between the referent text and the alluding text. This contrast in and of itself serves as the new perspective which the belated author has supplied; "[Agnon] grappled with [Midrashic texts] and interpreted them for his own purposes, thus pointing out the abyss between the tradition of the past and the present."³⁰¹

In terms of the ventriloquistic characteristics noted above that create the effacing of boundaries in Midrash, Agnon comes quite close to reproducing the tone and style of the Rabbis in Midrash, yet we remain aware that he makes no pretense of channeling their voices; we actually hear a doubled voice, as the Rabbis words ring forth piously, and are echoed back ironically by Agnon. How does he signal to us that he is not ventriloquizing?

Agnon's work would seem in many instances to engage in a domain of problems that runs along the same lines as the sacred books of Jewish tradition, problems such as piety, study of Torah, *tiqqun* (the Kabbalistic notion of repairing cosmic brokenness), redemption, and so on. While his writings are not anonymous strictly speaking, as they are published under his name, the same can be said for the oeuvre of Ḥabad which we will address presently, and which I will argue is definitively midrashic. Both the Ḥabad writings and those of Agnon seemingly share the characteristic of melding their words with those of the tradition, thus blurring the distinction between them and giving the sense that they are acting as the latter's mouthpieces. Both closely mimic the style of Midrash, such that even passages not actually drawn from the Midrashic corpus often pass as such, and both regularly paraphrase Midrashic statements as a way of commenting on them (some examples will be explored below). Yet Shaked is undoubtedly correct that Agnon, unlike the rebbes of Ḥabad, is in reality creating an antitext, and the attentive reader understands this intuitively (even as the superficial reader often misses this!). What strategies does Agnon use to create the distance between his words and those of the rabbis that is absent from the Ḥabad work?

We might argue that Agnon's intertextuality does not refer exclusively to canonical, sacred sources, but also significantly to secular, modern sources³⁰²; yet this can be found within

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 38.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 48.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 47.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 36.

³⁰² Ibid, 39 ff.

Rabbinic work as well.³⁰³ Perhaps the difference between Agnon and midrashic intertextuality is one of content alone, Agnon's writing being inherently secular, although arrayed in Midrashic trappings; but in this case, the dissonance would seem to be created not by the intertextual relations themselves, but the incongruity between the language and the content, as Shaked observed. Furthermore, we must ask, what is it that defines content as "secular?" We could point to the modern literary motifs and references with which Agnon is interlaced, but it goes beyond that; Agnon's writing is characterized by a telos that is unpious (although not necessarily impious).³⁰⁴ But how does Agnon alert us to his counter-pious orientation? At times Agnon tells identifiably secular tales, such as *Agunut* which is a classic love tale, even as it is garbed in Midrashic and traditional motifs. However, at times he tells (pseudo) Hasidic tales or other stories of the genre of tales of piety. What differentiates them from "authentic" piety tales?

One familiar with Agnon will know that other writings of his problematize the pious tone of some of his tales; the tale containing a traditionalist moral would be one bead, so to speak, on the overall string of his work, pulling toward the pole of yearning for the recapture of the holy, but is still only fully contextualized within the entirety of his writing, including its more rebellious elements. These varied genres taken together create the ontological tension in Agnon's oeuvre. We might also notice that Agnon made statements explicitly to the effect that he was *not* a bearer of tradition, thus providing a lens through which to be read.³⁰⁵ Additionally, the context of the publication of his writings also points away from an objective of piety, as they were not published in religious publications nor were they attempts to infuse piety in secular platforms. Yet, we should ask whether there is something in his "pious" tales themselves that signal to the reader that they are, in fact, counter-pious? I posit that there is, and that this is the element of ambivalence.

I will illustrate this via an analysis of a story by Agnon that may easily be taken as a pious story, and which I read as uncynical, a property which may contribute to its being taken by many at face value. I refer to Agnon's story, "*Ve-lo nikashel* (That we not stumble)."³⁰⁶ The story tells of how the narrator hosted a young woman for a meal at his Jerusalem home, and how when reciting the grace after the meal (*birkat ha-mazon*), the narrator chanted the phrase "*she-lo nevosh ve-lo nikalem* (that we never be ashamed nor disgraced)" with the additional words "*ve-lo nikashel* (nor stumble)," at which the young guest expressed surprise, as it is an obscure version of the liturgy which she took to be erroneous. (Although all three phrases are found in juxtaposition elsewhere in the prayerbook, it is quite an idiosyncratic phraseology within the grace after meals.³⁰⁷) The narrator justifies himself to her by saying "this is the tradition I have received from my father's house." Further on in the story the narrator comes across an obscure prayerbook that does in fact contain this version, which he proceeds to mail to the young woman

³⁰³ See Galit Hasan-Rokem, "An Almost Invisible Presence: Multilingual Puns in Rabbinic Literature," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 222-239; Daniel Boyarin, "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," in *ibid.*, 336-363, esp. 363.

³⁰⁴ See Shaked, *Agnon*, 38: "Agnon borrowed from the tradition in order to tear it down, not to strengthen the beliefs of pious Jews."

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰⁶ Agnon, *Elu ve-elu*, (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1968), 289-295.

³⁰⁷ See the discussion at "Ve-lo nikashel be-Agnon," Be-hadre haredim, accessed August 2, 2021 https://www.bhol.co.il/forums/topic.asp?cat_id=38&topic_id=2452077&forum_id=19616. Some possible sources for this idiosyncratic version of the *birkat ha-mazon* are suggested.

who has since returned to her native Germany, having “dipped the tip of my pen in red ink, and I underlined the words ‘*ve-lo nikashel*,’ so that if she reads it, she will see.” The story continues with the young woman’s return to the Land of Israel and her invitation to the narrator to attend her wedding. After the reception the newlywed bride reveals to the narrator that the prayerbook he sent her with its red underline had been the impetus of a personal miracle. While in Germany she had been courted by a gentile suitor and had almost agreed to marry him, when the narrator’s package arrived, and she skimmed through the book. “The two words *ve-lo nikashel* came and prostrated themselves before her.” That was the catalyst of her leaving the gentile, reconnecting with an old Jewish flame, and returning to Palestine to marry him.

On the face of it, a simple story. Its moral is spelled out by the narrator both at the beginning and the end of the tale: one should be careful not to change the version of the liturgy as they received it from their forebears. “If on account of two words, a Jewish soul was saved and remained Jewish, how many Jewish souls would be saved from assimilation and destruction if only all of Israel were meticulous about their ancestral customs?” (295). It is, to all appearances, a pious story, one of quasi-miraculous serendipity, with a pious message. Yet a careful reading reveals that its explicit moral is not the story’s intent at all; such a reading is one that is attentive to the particular sense of irony that Agnon creates in his storytelling through his habit of saying one thing explicitly and then belying his own assertion by describing the opposite situation.

Agnon opens his tale with the aphorism “Let one never deviate in prayer from one’s ancestral liturgy,” and concludes similarly: “How great are the words of the sages, ‘Let one always be meticulous regarding one’s ancestral customs.’” The latter locution, attributed to “the sages,” is in fact a paraphrase of the Talmudic dicta “Be meticulous regarding the customs of your fathers which you possess” (b*Beṣah*, 4b) and “Let one never deviate from custom” (b*Bava Meṣi’a*, 86b). The former applies these principles to the liturgical sphere, which, while not referenced in the Talmudic contexts cited above, is a widely-held norm within *halakhah* (Jewish law) as well as within communal practices, and was a major bone of contention in the eighteenth-century controversies between the nascent Hasidic movement and their detractors, to which Agnon alludes in the first part of his story. Thus Agnon provides, in pseudo-rabbinic form, an articulation of traditional norms. Agnon’s story presents itself, once again in good Talmudic fashion, as an *‘uvda*, an “act,” i.e. an instance of the application of the principle in a life situation, which “act” serves as a precedent to verify the principle. In this case, care regarding the received liturgy facilitated the saving of a Jewish soul from intermarriage.

Yet, the second paragraph of the story immediately undermines this message. “The prayer arrangement with which I pray has changed from the version of my ancestors.” The narrator justifies himself: “How does one deviate from his ancestral liturgy, changing one order for another? But the wanderings that I have wandered from my start until now brought this about” (289). Further on he adds additional justifications: “So as not to separate from the community, I would pray in each location according to its liturgical version... Though I was aware that one may not change from one version to another, because of the prohibition of ‘Do not create sects (*lo titgodedu*),’³⁰⁸ and because the communal prayer is precious, I permitted myself to deviate” (290). “Every place [of prayer] that I visit I pray with their liturgy, in order to include my prayer with that of the community” (291). The narrator is ambivalent about this state

³⁰⁸ See Deuteronomy, 14:1; b*Yevamoth*, 14a; *Shulḥan arukh*, *Orah ḥayyim*, 493:3.

of affairs, decrying it in his opening paragraph as something that has “brought about wanton disaster above and below, increased discord in Israel, and has sapped the strength of Israel below and above. The world has not yet returned to normal” (289). He likewise concludes the tale with the sentiment that Israel would fare much better “if only” people remained faithful to their liturgy. This notwithstanding, the circumstances of his own abrogation of this ideal seem to convey a pessimism about the possibility of its actual implementation.

As with the story’s purported moral, the unfolding of events that Agnon goes on to describe are characterized by the same contradictory and ironic quality. Careful reading of the story as a whole reveals it to be less a story about the power of the traditional liturgy, and more about the decline of Jewish tradition altogether and the nagging question of whether and how much of it may be salvaged. The presence or absence of the words “*ve-lo nikashel*” serve as a metaphor for the question of whether “we” will or will not be protected from “stumbling,” from losing our contact with Jewish tradition. This is underscored by the words of the narrator in response to the young maiden’s protestations that the phrase “*ve-lo nikashel*” is not to be found in the grace after meals.

I said facetiously “Fortunate are you, who dwell in the land of Ashkenaz (Germany), who do not require this! For you are all wise, from your greatest to your smallest, and you are not in danger of stumbling. Therefore have your prayerbooks omitted this request. But we, people of Poland, woe is me if I say so! we direly need this prayer, and would that we be found worthy before the Omnipresent and He hear our request. Therefore was it instated in our prayerbooks. (292)

While this statement is made in ostensible jest, the explicit level of the story suggests precisely that (recitation of) the phrase and the elusion of stumbling are closely linked. In the story’s denouement, the words “*ve-lo nikashel*” are the device that rescues the heroine from her near-stumble.

However, unlike the narrator’s (tongue-in-cheek) assertion that only those in danger of stumbling need say the phrase, and that these are more likely Jews of Polish extraction rather than the upright German Jews, it is precisely the young guest’s return to her native Germany that puts her in the situation of nearly capitulating to the blandishments of her non-Jewish suitor. The arrival of the narrator’s package with its highlighted words of *ve-lo nikashel* move the heroine to abandon not only her admirer but also her birthplace, where “her ancestors had served in the rabbinate of many of the holy congregations in the Diaspora” (291-2). Only upon returning to Palestine is she able to establish a traditional Jewish home and resurrect her connection to her heritage. Ultimately, neither the liturgy of the narrator nor that of his young guest are the determining factor, but the realization that even the most devout of young women cannot resist the winds of assimilation in the Diaspora, be it in Germany or Poland; the only hope for maintaining Jewish tradition is transplantation to the Land of Israel, where the chances of success are higher but still far from guaranteed.³⁰⁹ Agnon’s tale is thus an expression not of piety, but of pining for a naïve piety that can no longer be accessed. Agnon doesn’t rebel against

³⁰⁹ See Shaked, *Agnon*, 13 ff. on Agnon’s perspective on living in the Land of Israel.

piety; he yearns for it, as evident in his own life.³¹⁰ But he believes that the way is permanently barred.

Thus even in one of Agnon's more pious stories, the careful reader will not be lulled into hearing the Voice of Authority emerging from Agnon's mouth. The subtle contradictions that Agnon sets up create the ironic distance necessary to disturb the apparent piety of the story's message and to convey the author's ambivalence. This is certainly true of others of his stories, where the pious verbiage of his rhetoric and the secular theme of his narrative intensify the irony greatly. While we might not expect that every tale of Agnon's would express the same level of ambivalence, I nevertheless believe the short story I have discussed here demonstrates that even at his most traditionalist, Agnon is still creating an "antitradition" rather than perpetuating the authoritative assertions of the tradition. In this way his intertextuality is indeed "repeating *differently*" the words he inherited, and therefore quite distant from what can be described as midrashic.

Midrashic intertextuality, therefore, cannot be merely a formal element of the text, its absolute immersion in the world, language, and notions of another corpus, especially a canonical one; rather, the invoking of the canonical texts must be done without irony or ambivalence, but with a sense of participation. Unlike Agnon, the rebbes of Ḥabad spoke explicitly toward pious ends, in both oral and written contexts meant to bolster piety, and to a community of faithful; their relationship to their sources was unambivalent, and even where one may find deviation, it is in the context of the endeavor to make the tone of the canon heard. I should emphasize that faithfulness to the tradition per se does not determine whether a text is midrashic, but rather the presence or absence of the attitude of *ambivalence* toward the tone of the tradition. So long as a text takes a participatory rather than ambivalent stance toward its canon, it can be midrashic even as it innovates upon or deviates from the canon. The above is of course not intended as a position on the value or appropriateness of skepticism and ambivalence vis-à-vis the Judaic canon, but only as a description and definition of the term "midrash" and what its salient properties are.

In an illuminating anecdote, the late bibliographer and scholar Yehoshua Mondshine relates a rare moment when the Rebbe voiced his opinion on Agnon. Mondshine had asked the Rebbe regarding the appropriateness of publishing an essay on a story by S.Y. Agnon.³¹¹ The Rebbe responded:

He is already in the "world of truth," and they say that he was observant in his personal life. However, his writings... With potatoes one cannot create a counterfeit coin (*mit bulbes ken men nit falshen a matbeye*); only with adulterated gold, adulterated silver, and adulterated copper.

Nevertheless, although the Rebbe thought that one's time could be put to better use, he did not hinder Mondshine from publishing the paper, as it was already written up and would be published under a pseudonym, "and perhaps some benefit will result from it." After its

³¹⁰ Elchanan Shiloh, *The Kabbalah in the Works of S.Y. Agnon* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011), 21; see also Tomer Persico, "Ha-qabbalah be-yetsirat S.Y. Agnon," at Lula'at ha-el, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://tomerpersico.com/tag/%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%A0%D7%9F-%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%94/>. See Shaked, *Agnon*, 44-45.

³¹¹ Yehoshua D. Levanon, "Motivim Habadiyim be-'Ha-nidah' le-Sh.Y. Agnon," *Biqoret u-farshanut: Ketav et le-sifrut, lashon, historiya, ve-estetika*, 16 (February, 1981): 135-153.

publication, Mondshine sent a copy of the essay to the Rebbe, to which the Rebbe responded in a letter:

With regard to the books by S.Y.A. – an analogy to and an explanation of the matter: It is obvious the care [needed] and the danger [present] with counterfeit bills of currency when they contain citations from authentic bills, even if such be distorted. The more citation there is, the greater is the danger.³¹²

Following the Rebbe's metaphors, it is evident that he was alive to both Agnon's pseudo-rabbinic style as well as to his un-midrashic content, and sharply distinguished it from "authentic" Jewish writing. While the Rebbe saw Agnon as reproducing the language of his sources quite faithfully, he perceived that the tone of *Hazal* (*hakhamenu zikhronam li-vrakhah*, "our Sages of blessed memory") was not being perpetuated in his writings. It is this distinction that I consider definitive of what is and what is not midrashic intertextuality.

Effacement of Boundaries

The possibility of ventriloquizing the Voice of Authority correlates with a perspective that does not admit an impassible barrier between the past and the present. As we showed regarding Agnon, this barrier is precisely the subject of his tale, as it is of much of his writing. The effacement of such a barrier is characteristic of texts of a midrashic quality, a subject I will yet return to in a later chapter. In what follows I wish to focus once more on the Habad texts and identify the strategies by which they achieve this effacement and by which they seek to perpetuate the authoritative Voice of tradition. The midrashic stance of the Rebbe's discourses is evident in the orientation they maintain toward the discourses of the previous rebbes, as well as in his and their posture toward the older texts of the tradition. Let us illustrate more fully the strategies by which this perpetuation and effacement are achieved, and how the distinctions between the past and the present, between human and divine, and between one rebbe and another are dissolved.

At the outset of this chapter, the Midrashic phrase "All sevenths are beloved" was cited. In the discourse of 5737, the Rebbe commented regarding the fact that, in what had by now become a tradition, the seventh chapter of *Bosi le-ganni* was being studied (for the second time) and was the focus of his discourse, that "all sevenths are beloved, as above." He is referring, of course, to the earlier citation of Lev. Rabbah (29:11) to this effect, which Rayyats had included in his discourse in connection with Song of Songs Rabbah's designation of Moses as the ultimate saint in the chain of seven who had brought the presence of the *Shekhinah* back to earth.

An almost throwaway remark here, the reference brings to mind the momentous emphasis this phrase was given in the Rebbe's original *Bosi le-ganni* discourse of 5711. Above we cited some of the Rebbe's commentary on this phrase, and his identification of himself and his audience as the "seventh generation." He further asserts there in no uncertain terms that "what is required of us, the seventh generation, all sevenths being favored... We find ourselves

³¹² Mordechai Menashe Laufer, "Al sifrut u-sefarim," Chabad of Israel, accessed January 16, 2020, <http://chabad.org.il/Magazines/Article.asp?ArticleID=8874&CategoryID=1657>; "Teshurah me-hagigat ha-bar mitsvah shel Menahem Mendel Mondshine" (17 Kislev, 5768), accessed January 16, 2020, <http://teshura.com/Mondshine-BM-Kislev%2017%2C%205768.pdf>.

in the [era of] the ‘heels of the Messiah (*iqvata de-meshiḥa*),’³¹³ at the conclusion of the ‘heels,’ and our job is to complete the drawing down of the *Shekhinah*; not only the *Shekhinah*, but the primary *Shekhinah*, and especially below.”³¹⁴ Just as in the Midrashic narrative in which the seven generations of saints accomplished the drawing of the *Shekhinah* back down to earth from the uppermost realm of heaven, the same was occurring before the very eyes of the Hasidim in the second half of the twentieth century.³¹⁵ The *Bati le-ganni* Midrash, then, is not merely a model for the Rebbe’s cosmology, but is being reenacted within the history of Ḥabad.

Thus, rather than the Midrash’s ideal of a divine descent to dwell among humanity being seen as no longer possible, or understood metaphorically as perhaps moments of contentment or inspiration that individuals enjoy on occasion, the Rebbe portrayed the return of the *Shekhinah* as a realistic aspiration and as an already-occurring phenomenon. In much the way that the Midrash continues to address the same concerns as the Bible, the Rebbe continues to be concerned with the phenomena of the Midrashic world. He entirely effaces any division between what the Midrash conceives of as possible and desirable and what is attainable for people of his own time.

The effacement of boundaries in the Rebbe’s thought is also thematized by similar strategies to those of the Midrash, in the process of citation. We noted above how the Midrash “says” in an anonymous voice of authority, whether its statements are attributed or not. Attaching a teaching to the name of a specific rabbi does not have the effect of granting that utterance the weight of the credibility of that particular articulator; rather, the thought emanates from the collectivity of *Razal*, through whom Authority speaks. The discourses of the Ḥabad rebbes likewise project Authority through their methods of citation. At their core, the *derushim* represent *divrey eloykim khayim*, “words of the Living G-d,” a precedent set by R. Schneur Zalman, the founder of Ḥabad.³¹⁶ R. Dov Ber’s fitness to succeed to his father in the second generation of Ḥabad was predicated on his having access to the same founts of inspiration from the realms of the Merkavah.³¹⁷ Thus the context for drawing on the thought of earlier rebbes in later discourses is their purporting to similarly partake of the status of being a conduit for the *Shekhinah*. In more prosaic terms, each successive rebbe is in the first place recapitulating and retransmitting the teachings of his predecessors in his own discourses.

Notwithstanding the function of “repeater” that each rebbe fills, there is a need for and expectation of *ḥiddush* as well, of innovation, in line with the Talmudic maxim that “there can be no study hall [session] without a novel insight” (see *bHagiga*, 3a). Loewenthal observes that one of the objections to R. Dov Ber as successor to R. Schneur Zalman was the perceived lack of innovation in his teaching.³¹⁸ The expectation of *ḥiddush* is made explicit by the Rebbe, who portrays innovation in the Ḥabad discourse as follows:

³¹³ See *bSotah*, 49b; conventionally translated as “the footsteps of the Messiah.” However, see Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” 8, and Shochet, “Iggeret Hakodesh,” 470, where this term is used in the sense of “heels.”

³¹⁴ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 9.

³¹⁵ See ch Gender, “Messianic Destiny,” on the advent of the messianic era in the Rebbe’s thought.

³¹⁶ See above, Background, “The *Maymer*.” See also Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 34, citing R. Zev Wolf of Zhitomer quoting the Maggid, that one must allow “the ‘World of Speech’” to speak through them, and how when the Maggid spoke it was often “as if the *Shekhinah* were speaking from his throat.”

³¹⁷ Loewenthal, *ibid*, 104.

³¹⁸ See Chitrik, *Reshimot devarim*, 113, regarding R. Dov Ber’s indignation in response to a Hasid’s comment that “there was no *ḥiddush* in today’s *khasides*”. Loewenthal *ibid*. See also Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Torat Menahem: Reshimat ha-yoman*, revised ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2015), 284,

As a rule, there is something novel in every discourse. It is conceivable that this novel element can be sourced generally within earlier discourses; however, each discourse has its own innovative insight nevertheless... When an anomalous version, style, or interpretation of a statement of *Razal* is cited, this is certainly deliberate, and it represents the originality of that [particular] discourse...³¹⁹

The Rebbe's articulation of how *hiddush* is present in the discourses of the rebbes situates it as couched within a teaching that paraphrases well-established Habad ideas, innovating by a turn of phrase or by a somewhat new angle. Indeed, the above-cited words of the Rebbe represent a response to the problem (perhaps raised by querying Hasidim) regarding a thought in Rayyats's discourse that appeared to deviate from conventional Habad teaching, pointing to the very tension between the expectations of fidelity to the sources and originality.

Nevertheless, there are formal differences in how such originality is presented in the discourses of the first six generations and how it is incorporated in the Rebbe's discourses, the description of which will illustrate the above-mentioned phenomenon of effacement through citation, and the unique manner in which the Rebbe practiced this.³²⁰ To illustrate: An editorial footnote on Rayyats's discourse in the *Bosi le-ganni* edition informs us that "this *hemshekh* is [a reprint of] the discourses *Wa-yehi be-'ezem ha-yom ha-zeh* and *Wa-yomer... mah tits 'aq 'elay* 5683 (1923)... with modified beginnings and conclusions." These were discourses delivered by Rayyats in the early years of his tenure of leadership. The editors go on to identify these discourses as "based on the discourses *Bati le-ganni* 5658 (1898)... [and] *Be-'etsem ha-yom ha-zeh* 5680 (1920)..." of Rashab. These in turn, we are told in a sub-footnote, are "based on the discourse *Shtey yaddot* 5633 (1873) [by Maharash]... the discourse of the same title in *Or ha-torah, Terumah*" by the *Tsemakh tsedek*, and "the discourse *Ki teze* 5631 (1871) ..." by Maharash.³²¹

An inspection of these discourses reveals that much of their content, and often even their language, is highly similar. Yet, there are no references within the texts of the discourses that associate their content with an earlier expositor. To illustrate: the discourse *Shtey yaddot* by Maharash is essentially a recapitulation of the same discourse by the *Tsemakh tsedek*, with additional glosses.³²² However, the text does not explicitly refer to the fact that it represents Maharash's glosses on his predecessor's work. Rashab's *Bati le-ganni* expatiates on many of the same themes as his father's and grandfather's discourse(s), again without direct attribution. Rayyats's discourse(s) repeat his father's almost verbatim, with additional interpretation as well as uniting them into one *hemshekh*, once more without reference to Rashab. There can be no question as to the relationship of these texts to one another once they are set out in juxtaposition; but an uninitiated eye would not detect any dependence on other Hasidic writing from a survey

regarding competition between Maharash and his older brother in "repeating" their father's discourse, and the superior innovator acknowledged as the true channel of the *Tsemakh Tsedek*; Barukh Schneur Schneersohn, *Reshimot ha-Rabash* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2001), 24, about Rashab's dissatisfaction with a rival rebbe's lack of contribution to Habad thought.

³¹⁹ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:144.

³²⁰ The distinctions I make here are general; it is likely that closer analysis of each rebbe's style would yield insight into each one's individual modes of citation and innovation.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 1:3 (Arabic numerals).

³²² See note in Shmuel Schneersohn, *Liqutei Torah – Torat Shemu'el – 5633* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1994), 150.

of any one of these discourses in isolation.³²³ It is only due to fluency in the breadth of Ḥabad exposition and/or initiation into the knowledge of what the process of the elaboration of Ḥabad thought consists of that allows the reader/auditor to perceive references in the text and to locate them.

Put another way, the rebbes' lack of attribution is in no wise a pretense of passing off the work of another as their own. On the contrary, it is precisely an understanding of the context of the production of a Ḥabad discourse, that it is essentially the re-presentation of the canonical teachings of the earlier masters albeit with some original addition on the part of the reiterating rebbe, that obviates the need to explicitly attribute it.³²⁴ Thus the question can be asked, what is being obscured in the discourses – the fact that they are derivative, or the later rebbe's innovation in the subject? We will return to this question after surveying the Rebbe's style of organizing his discourses, especially those of *Bosi legani*, elements of which we have examined above.

The very first discourse delivered by the Rebbe at his “inaugural address” on 10 *Shevat*, 1951, began with the words: “My father-in-law, the Rebbe, writes in the discourse [associated with] the day of his passing...”³²⁵ In this he both conformed with and deviated from the example of his predecessors. R. Menachem Mendel recited a discourse that was ostensibly a reprising of Rayyats's with further elaboration supplied by the new rebbe; however, from the outset he explicitly cited his source. Throughout the discourse as well, the Rebbe mentioned each of the Ḥabad masters by their appellations when recapitulating a teaching of theirs. This pattern was repeated in each of the *Bosi legani* discourses throughout the years of his leadership. But the path of explicit citation was not chosen only for these discourses, where R. Menachem Mendel intentionally recited the names of each of his predecessors, as discussed in the previous chapter; it is a ubiquitous phenomenon in a great many of the Rebbe's discourses. It is as likely as not that an earlier rebbe is named, or at least referred to, as the author of a teaching being discussed in a given discourse.

On the other hand, particularly in the format of the officially edited discourses, the Rebbe's own contributions are often clearly demarcated by such terms as *ve-yesh lomar* (it is possible to say), *le-hosif* (we might add), and the like.³²⁶ Out of close to forty years' worth of discourses (1951-1988), having delivered tens of discourses each year, 188 discourses were published as having been edited by the Rebbe (including *Bosi legani*, 5737 (1977)).³²⁷ As the phenomenon of the Rebbe having officially edited discourses released became more common (during the 1980's), there developed a set format in which the Rebbe's own inferences and further development of earlier Ḥabad teachings were made apparent by these linguistic signposts. Although this does not seem to be a prominent feature in the oral version of the discourses, as

³²³ Maharash's text might arguably be an exception; it is not clear to me how obvious it is from his manuscript that he is transcribing and glossing his father's text. Nevertheless, my sense is that Maharash's text likewise does not explicitly exhibit its dependence on the earlier text.

³²⁴ See *bYevamot*, 96b: “R. Elazar your student sits and expounds without attribution, and everyone knows that it is yours.”

³²⁵ Schneerson, *ibid*, 1:6.

³²⁶ A comparison of, e.g., the discourse “*Ve-qibbel ha-yehudim – 5711 (1951)*” in its unofficial transcript (Schneerson, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – 5711, 5712, 5713* (Brooklyn: 1988), 24 ff) and its official edited version (Schneerson, *Meluqat*, 3:67 ff), clearly indicates that these terms were added in the edited version.

³²⁷ Published as the series *Sefer ha-ma'amarim meluqat*, vols. 1-6 (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1987-1992).

reflected in the free transcripts, the choice to adopt this style in the edited format, presumably at the Rebbe's direction or at any rate with his approval, is significant.

One way of accounting for the Rebbe's unique style in laying out his discourses may relate to his position as director of the Lubavitch publishing house, Kehot Publication Society, and chief editor of the Hasidic publications that the movement disseminated. The Rebbe's involvement in editing Lubavitch material began yet in Europe during the 1930s,³²⁸ and became one of his official capacities upon his arrival to the United States, as discussed above, including the editing and annotation of the material to be published.³²⁹ It is possible to view the Rebbe's position toward the earlier discourses as essentially perpetuating his capacity of annotator of the Ḥabad heritage. As such, it is possible that (at least in print) he considered it appropriate to differentiate his own expansions from the original teachings of the earlier rebbes. Nevertheless, this attitude itself must be justified. What is suggested by the Rebbe positioning himself as merely an annotator to the treasures of Ḥabad, rather than as a creator of those treasures in his own right? (I say "positioning himself," because the Rebbe was certainly not oblivious to his own contributions³³⁰; rather, I am describing the mode in which his innovations are presented.) What effect is achieved by this deviation from the apparent standard practice of the Ḥabad masters to obscure their own words within those of their forebears?

In the differing methods of repeating and innovating that the rebbes of Ḥabad utilized, those of the earlier rebbes and that of the Rebbe, we have two forms of ventriloquizing the voice of Authority. The early rebbes spoke the words of their predecessors without attribution, "as if" they were their own, sharing the understanding with their Hasidim that they were but repeating their ancestors' words. In the course of doing so, those innovated aspects that were woven into the discourse could likewise take on the aura of the authority of Ḥabad tradition. That this is so is evident from contrasting the practice of the rebbes with what was expected of the Hasidim, which was to recite the teachings without deviation from the authoritative text.³³¹ A rebbe's ability to paraphrase and even introduce a novel insight already displayed authority. Concomitantly, while a rebbe was empowered and expected to innovate, ultimately his authority and that of his words stemmed from their drawing on the Voice of Authority represented by the heritage of the earlier generations. Thus his recital of the discourse was, on its face, a transmitting of the inherited wisdom.

The Rebbe, on the other hand, liberally attributed his citations to his predecessors and (to greater or lesser degrees) differentiated his own thoughts from theirs. Thus he presented his thoughts "as if" they were his own, which can be taken as implying that his own words were not of the same caliber as those of the earlier rebbes, and should not be confused with theirs. At the same time, the Rebbe's more readily identifiable contributions within the sanctified discourse also suggested, and was of course understood as such by his audience, that even his words partook of Authority. In this way he ultimately underscored the canonicity of his own innovations to a greater degree than did previous rebbes, precisely by distinguishing his words

³²⁸ See Y. Schneersohn, *Igrot qodesh*, 15:208 (see notes).

³²⁹ See "Oznayim L'Torah: The Rebbe's effort to make Torah accessible to everyone," A Chassidisher Derher, Av, 5778, 13 ff, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://derher.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Derher-Av-5778-1.pdf>, for much of the information as well as attitudes discussed here.

³³⁰ The insertion of the phrases *ve-yesh lomar* etc. indicate as much.

³³¹ Notable exceptions are the cases of R. Hillel of Malasov Paritsh (1795-1864), author of *Pelah Ha-rimon*, and R. Aisik Epstein of Homel (1770-1857), author of *Hana Ari'el*, who produced original discourses.

from theirs. While a rebbe is expected to perpetuate his received heritage, the Rebbe was not reticent about overtly innovating. Ironically, in his manner of making his innovating evident he arguably expresses a greater self-confidence in his rebbehood than earlier rebbes did. (I don't wish to overstate my case here; I believe that every rebbe was confident in their status, and that each considered themselves in some ways inferior to their predecessors. But it is important to accentuate the different manner in which the Rebbe performed these attitudes compared to the previous Ḥabad masters.)

The two modes of presenting innovation within tradition that we have identified in the generations of Ḥabad teaching enact two models of ventriloquism. In the earlier model, the new words are spoken in the voice of Authority through their non-differentiation from the words of the tradition; in the Rebbe's model, the new words are endowed with the voice of Authority specifically by their standing apart from the words of tradition, but on equal footing. As part of a discourse deemed "the words of the Living G-d" in its entirety, every word, even those attributed or evidently original, speaks with the authority of tradition and of the divine realm. Thus, both models may be traced back to the Midrashic strategies of ventriloquism, that of anonymous or unattributed discourse, as well as that of attribution which serves to ultimately credit the teaching to the collectivity of *Razal*. In choosing the option of setting apart his own voice, the Rebbe lays bare the space of his own agency created by his citation of tradition. I emphasize that he lays this quality bare: this phenomenon is present throughout all the Ḥabad discourses, but the Rebbe makes it evident. Kronfeld's theory of intertextuality as constituting the space of agency is thus instantiated in the seventh Ḥabad rebbe's discourses, even as such agency requires no resistance to his heritage on his part. We might say that he "repeats differently" by fully accepting the canonical authority, and by fusing his own innovation fully with the tradition.

R. Menachem Mendel's discourses thus thematize the effacement of boundaries achieved by his midrashic intertextuality in their very form, as they are premised on the assumption that all its words, the traditional and the innovated, the past and the present, partake of the same voice of Authority, the voice that is perpetuated by the repetition of older teachings just as it is by the revelation of new teachings. This effacement is accomplished by the intertextuality of the discourses, which enmesh the old and the new, conferring the same eternally-present divine Authority on the new as was projected through the old.

"Within Each and Every One"

The complex of concepts and phenomena we have touched upon thus far: the perpetuation of the voice of authority and the effacement of temporal, generational, and conceptual boundaries inherent in Midrash as well as in midrashic texts down to those of the Ḥabad school; the strategies of the Ḥabad rebbes to produce these effects; and the Rebbe's distinctive approach in his own work, is exemplified, theorized and thematized in one further excerpt from the *Bosi legani* series. It is a citation found in almost every *Bosi legani* discourse, glossing Exodus 25:8.³³² This instance embodies an effacement of boundaries practically across all time, as it draws the presence of history from the era of the Sages (and through them, the

³³² It is in *Bosi legani* 5717 (1957), for example, but not in 5737 (1977); see addendum.

Bible), through the mediation of the influence of sixteenth-century Safed, and down to Ḥabad thought in its generations.

In the first chapter of Rayyats's discourse, paraphrased by the Rebbe in 5717, he articulates the following:

It is written: 'Let them make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell *betokham* (within/among them)' (Ex. 25:8). "In *it*" is not stated; rather, "in *them*," within each and every one.³³³

In an editorial footnote, a version of which can be found in some of the edited (*mugah*) discourses as well, and as such attributable to the Rebbe, the reference is given thus:

Cited in the name of "*Razal*" in *Liqqutey torah*, beg. portion of *Nasso*, 20b; and in several places. See *Reshit hokhmah*, Gate of Love, ch. 6 toward the beginning (s.v. *u-sheney pessuqim*); *Alsheikh* on Exodus, *ibid* ("shama 'ti lomdim"); *Sheney luhot ha-berit*, 69a; 201a; sec. *Torah she-biketav*, *Terumah*, 325b. Cf. *Likutey sikhes*, vol. 36, 173, n45.³³⁴

Rayyats (in this source) does not attribute the gloss on Exodus 25:8, but states it in the unattributed voice of Authority of the Ḥabad tradition. The Rebbe's note reveals several significant details about the source of this gloss. The first is that it initially makes its appearance in the Ḥabad tradition within the thought of R. Schneur Zalman. Second, R. Schneur Zalman's text attributes it to *Razal*, i.e. it should be locatable within the Rabbinic corpus. Third, there does not seem to be an identifiable source within that corpus where this locution is found.

R. Schneur Zalman's thought referred to in this footnote is that which is found in the collection of discourses published as the book of *Liqqutey torah*, which we described earlier.³³⁵ Unlike his book of *Tanya*, it is not the product of the author's own hand. The attribution to *Razal* might therefore have simply been credited to scribal error and would not even merit mention in the Rebbe's annotation.³³⁶ However, the Rebbe takes this attribution as accurate to R. Schneur Zalman's thought and conception and endeavors to substantiate it.³³⁷ Given that it was the third rebbe that edited the work of *Liqqutey torah*, this stands to reason.

Three sources are adduced by the Rebbe to this end: *Reshit hokhmah* ("Beginning of Wisdom"), a pietistic (*mussar*) work drawing heavily on the Zohar, written by R. Elijah b. Moses de Vidas, disciple of R. Moses Cordovero of Safed (16th century); *Alsheikh*, the popular appellation of the work *Torat moshe* ("Moses' Torah") of R. Moshe Alsheikh of Safed (1508-c1593), representing reworkings of his sermons into a commentary on the Pentateuch and other biblical books read liturgically; and *Sheney luhot ha-berit* ("The Two Tablets of the Covenant," popularly abbreviated as *Shelah*), a multi-faceted work of pietism, *halakhah* (Torah law), and commentary on the Torah with strong Lurianic influences, written by R. Isaiah Ha-levi Horowitz of Frankfurt and Safed (1558-1628). All three sources are of quite late dates, and two of them, *Reshit hokhmah* and *Sheney luhot ha-berit*, are explicitly kabbalistic. These works were major factors in the popularization of Kabbalah in the 17th century, and helped shape the early Hasidic

³³³ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni* 1:3 (Arabic numerals).

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 1:231. See *ibid*, 1:51, in a *mugah* discourse (5732 (1972)).

³³⁵ Ch Background, "The Written Discourse."

³³⁶ Indeed, the phrase appears several times throughout R. Schneur Zalman's corpus, often without attribution to *Razal*.

³³⁷ The phrase is likewise given a *razalic* attribution by the successive rebbes as well in multiple places.

movement.³³⁸ It is therefore no surprise that this teaching is so oft-quoted within the Ḥabad corpus, and that its citation reflects an unquestioned expectation of familiarity by the Hasidic audience. More revealing, however, are the attributions assumed by these sources themselves. None of them suggest that this is indeed a *Razalic* statement, as a closer look at the references will bear out.

Reshit ḥokhmah states simply “this is the meaning of ‘Let them make me a sanctuary that I might dwell with(in) them,’ it does not say “within it,” but “within them,”” without any attribution, implying that this is either de Vidas’s own insight, or a commonly-accepted notion. *Shelah* likewise repeats this gloss in several contexts, as the Rebbe notes, without attribution. *Alsheikh* is the earliest of these authors and their possible source.³³⁹ His formulation of this interpretation to Exodus 25:8 bears some analysis. He writes:

Noticing [the Torah’s] statement, ‘that I might dwell with(in) them,’ not saying ‘within it.’ This is as *I have heard that some infer from here* that the primary indwelling of the *Shekhinah* is in man...³⁴⁰

He thus ascribes the gloss to “some” who infer this; whoever these might be, they are certainly not *Razal*. Following this, *Alsheikh* does in fact cite a relevant *Razalic* statement, albeit bearing no structural resemblance to his earlier exposition:

This is *as they, of blessed memory, said*, that in the times of Hillel the Elder a heavenly voice rang out and said, “there is among you one who is worthy that the *Shekhinah* dwell upon him like Moses our master, but the generation is not worthy” [b*Sanhedrin* 11a].

This passage, with its suggestion that the *Shekhinah* might dwell upon a person, is elucidated in light of another rabbinic teaching which will be familiar to us:

For from the start *the Shekhinah was below* before man sinned... Moses [brought it back] to earth. Hillel, too, was worthy to cause the *Shekhinah* to dwell on earth... However, his generation was not worthy.

The fact of the unworthiness of Hillel’s generation which prevented the *Shekhinah* from becoming manifest through Hillel underscores for *Alsheikh* that the primary abode of the *Shekhinah* is within the people, more so than within the material edifice of the Tabernacle.

When they are worthy that the *Shekhinah* dwell within their souls, the divine beneficence will descend and extend to the ‘Temple of G-d’ [cf. Jer. 7:4], for it is for their sake, to be with them, that he causes his name to dwell in that place. Their souls are the true tabernacle; from them does [the indwelling] extend to that specified place.

Alsheikh’s reference is thus the clearest in defining what is and what is not *Razalic* about this gloss and the notion it expresses. While it is consistent with classical rabbinic thought, as is

³³⁸ See Roman Foxbrunner, *Ḥabad: The Hasidism of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 4.

³³⁹ *Alsheikh* was a contemporary of Luria in Safed, while de Vidas was a disciple of the latter. Horowitz was heavily influenced by Lurianic thought.

³⁴⁰ Emphasis mine.

evident from the citation of *bSanhedrin* as well as other places,³⁴¹ it is not an actual saying of *Razal* in this particular form.

It is not uncommon for popular aphorisms of late provenance to be credited to *Razal*; another example would be the statement, popular in Hasidic works, that “the *Shekhinah* would speak from the throat of Moses.” While certain Zoharic and Midrashic statements might lend themselves to be interpreted in this way, this particular locution is of uncertain provenance.³⁴² Nevertheless it is often attributed to *Razal*, R. Levi Yitskhok of Berdichev even citing it as a Talmudic statement.³⁴³ These might be taken as simple erroneous conflation; however, the errors themselves, such as they are, are telling. The most immediate factor that provokes such conflation is the simulation of *Razalic* syntax in these phrases. “‘In it’ is not stated; rather, ‘in them,’ within each and every one,” mirrors, for instance, the locution of the opening Midrash of *Bosi legani*, “‘To the garden’ is not here written, but ‘to my garden,’ to my wedding canopy.” It begins with the negation of the “expected” term, emphasizes the “anomalous” actual phraseology, and concludes with a gloss. Thus the (presumably intentional) phrasing renders itself felicitous to misattribution to *Razal*.

Furthermore, and I contend that the same holds true for many, if not all, such pseudo-midrashim (and arguably for the operations that Midrash itself does on the Biblical verses), the pseudo-midrash emerges out of, and gains acceptance due to, a deep resonance with the thought patterns and *Weltanschauung* of the Midrash itself. Even if there is no such Midrashic gloss on Exodus 25:8, its sentiment is consonant with notions the rabbis do set forth. Thus commenting that “I will dwell... within each and every one,” echoes actual *Razalic* statements such as “At first... the *Shekhinah* dwelt with each and every one” (*Sotah*, 3b), and resonates with teachings such as “Let them make Me a sanctuary – As it were, G-d said: Take Me, that I might dwell among you... It is Me whom you are taking” (*Lev. Rabbah* 30:13). The pseudo-midrash is very much at home within the universe of Midrash.

More significantly, the Rebbe takes this (mis)attribution utterly seriously. This is addressed by the footnote’s final reference to *Likutey sikhos*, where the Rebbe himself addresses this discrepancy. There he writes:

This [attribution to *Razal*] is the phraseology of [R. Schneur Zalman]... To date I have found [the saying] in *Shelah*... This too is included in the category of “*Razal*,” especially since the words of the *Shelah* are cited in several places as a halakhic ruling (and the *Maggen avraham* (commentary by R. Abraham Abele Gombiner (1637-1682)) begins his work on *Shulhan ‘arukh* with the words of *Shelah*). According to what [R. Schneur Zalman] writes... his words have the force of a matter in *the Mishnah*...

The reference to R. Schneur Zalman regarding the inclusion of the work of *Shelah* in the category of “Mishnah” is to his Laws of Torah Study (2:1), where he expands the obligation of “[dedicating] one third [of one’s time] to the study of Mishnah” to include the rulings of the later halakhic authorities of the post-Talmudic eras. Since the work of *Shelah* is considered an important source of *halakhah* (as evidenced by its citation in Gombiner), it can be considered Mishnah, and its author therefore of an authority equivalent to *Razal*.

³⁴¹ Cf. Schneur Zalman, *Liqute torah*, Numbers, 85d (based on *Shelah*, *Terumah*, cited in the footnote).

³⁴² See sources cited in Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, 4:1087 fn5. Cf. Schneerson, *Mareh meqomot*, 207.

³⁴³ Levi Yitshaq of Berdichev, *Qedushat Levi*, (Brooklyn: Register Lithographers, 1992), 50b.

Let us unpack the import of this issue further by asking, what conceptual or theological space do *Razal* occupy in Ḥabad thought? Let us first note that the significance of attributing this teaching to *Razal* is of course tied in to the authority of *Razal*, as well as to the historical question of the provenance of this teaching. The above tracing of this teaching's origins demonstrates that it is not historically *Razalic*. Yet, it is ascribed to their authority. The generally-assumed diminishment of authority as the eras progress, on both legal as well as metaphysical levels, in accord with the principle of *yeridat ha-dorot* (descent of the generations),³⁴⁴ is here at least qualified, if not abolished. R. Schneur Zalman's ruling regarding what is categorized as Mishnah is thus quite fundamental here, arguably indicating the possibility of ascribing (even) Mishnaic authority to a late sage's words.

So much for the logic justifying the conferring of the authority of *Razal* to the words of more recent rabbis. What are the metaphysical implications of such attribution? The Ḥabad perspective on the teachings of the Rabbis may be summed up in the words of the *Tanya* that "the words of the sages of the Mishnah" are "a matter decreed by the wakeful ones and the statement of the holy ones,"³⁴⁵ and that "the spirit of G-d spoke within them, and his word was on the tongue"³⁴⁶ of *Razal* and their Midrashic expositions.³⁴⁷ Thus the ascription (by R. Schneur Zalman!) of a saying to *Razal* effectively gives it quasi-prophetic status, endowing it with the infallible and the potentially "omnisignificant" voice of Authority.

The term "omnisignificant" bears defining here, especially in the way that I am using it. James Kugel coined the term in reference to what he deems to be one of the basic assumptions of ancient biblical interpreters (including the Rabbis), which is that every word in the Bible is significant and worthy of study, including word choices, variant spellings, and anomalies.³⁴⁸ I am borrowing his term to represent an additional exegetical-theological perspective on the words of "Torah" (given whatever context that word is to be understood in): That the word can be returned to again and again to tease out new meanings that speak to new situations, in line with the dictum of the Mishnah, 'Turn it over again and again, for everything is in it' (Avot, 5:22). The premise underlying this assumption, as I see it, relates to the anonymity and collectivity of *Razal* as we observed earlier. The saying of any Midrashic rabbi, as noted, is deemed the product of *Razal*, effectively removing it from the presumably limited perspective and intent of a specific human being, and endowing it with a divine aura that can continue to speak and to mean even in radically new contexts. Thus the words of *Razal* are omnisignificant, not (only) in the sense that each word is significant, but in the sense that they are capable of containing a potentially unlimited number of meanings and applications, since they have ceased to be human words and have become "Torah," divine words, "words of the Living G-d."

We have, as such, a hermeneutic position taken up by R. Schneur Zalman and his successors that is consequential on several levels. First, it affirms the position of the Rabbis themselves, that they perpetuated the channeling of the voice of Authority recognized in the prophetic and Biblical articulations. It further recognizes the potential for post-Talmudic sages to embody the same perpetuation as do *Razal*. Additionally, the possibility is opened in the other

³⁴⁴ See b*Shabbat*, 112b.

³⁴⁵ Dan. 4:14; see b*Pesahim*, 33a.

³⁴⁶ See II Sam. 23:2.

³⁴⁷ Schochet, "Iggeret Hakodesh," 580; Mindel, "Likkutei Amarim," xxiv.

³⁴⁸ Kugel, "Ancient Biblical Interpretation," 18-19.

direction for the late words of the Ḥabad masters to evince similar qualities. In other words, it is precisely by expanding the rubric of *Razal* beyond its historic connotations that makes plausible the notion of the perpetuation of the voice of Authority within the discourses of the Ḥabad rebbes. Interestingly, the rebbes, like Agnon, use *Razal*-like syntax, but to the opposite effect: while Agnon's "language of the sages" creates an ironic effect, the use of such locution by the rebbes signals their continuity with the universe of *Razal*.

Once again, even as he continues the project of his predecessors, it is the Rebbe who lays bare the dynamic of attribution. It is he (in his editorial capacity) who raises the question "is this indeed of *Razalic* provenance?" He explicitly challenges such attribution. And he is the one to offer justification for such ascription. In the process, the Rebbe simultaneously demystifies the dynamic and infuses the now-concretized process with a new aura, as he upholds the continuing reverberation of the voice of Authority within a world that has become more prosaic.

The above example of the peregrinations of the notion of the *Shekhinah* dwelling with each individual and of its association with the ancient Rabbis is thus exemplary of one of the methods by which the voice of Authority is maintained throughout time, namely the misattribution of a late teaching to "the Rabbis." By the same token, the assumption that such an utterance has the divinely-inspired force of those of *Razal* denotes the conferral of the same Authority on the belated masters, denying that such Authority may no longer be accessible. The justification for such a perspective given by the Rebbe, that any Torah authority may achieve the status of an exponent of the Mishnah, provides a theory for how such perpetuation works, and allows for the possibility of such perpetuation to occur even within the era of modern Hasidism. By discussing the constituent parts of this history as well as providing his own commentary on the matter, the Rebbe exemplifies his style of laying bare the mechanisms of the production of the "words of the Living G-d" in Ḥabad teaching. Significantly, the content of the teaching itself is one that lends itself to such a suggestion; the divine presence should not be seen as belonging exclusively to a limited space or time, but may dwell "with each and every one."

In each of the examples given above, the replication of the Midrash on the levels of content (the facilitation of the *Shekhinah*'s return to earth), of format (channeling the voice of Authority through the anonymous or collective voice), and of syntax and strategy (using Midrashic phraseology to signal the persistence of its prophetic nature down to the current time), the Ḥabad masters actively negate the notion of an untraversable chasm between "then" and "now." Not only is this made explicit at times (such as in R. Schneur Zalman's comments about the authority of the Mishnaic sages cited above), but is thematized throughout their oeuvres in these multifarious ways. Like in the Midrashic works themselves, it is the rhetorical strategies of the Ḥabad discourses, more so than their explicit claims, that most compellingly express the sense and significance of the continuity they presume to have with the tradition writ large.

The Rebbe's role in all this is unique in that his method of perpetuating the voice of Authority is via a critical analysis of the constituent parts of a unit of tradition. While we might expect this approach to engender an obviation of any pretense of collectivity or mystery, the Rebbe's citation strategy continues to embody Authority through juxtaposition. He is the annotator and discoverer of new implications in the texts of tradition, the receiver who collects his reception and sorts it out in new ways. He portrays the tradition as coming through others, but in commenting on it, he perpetuates it, thus absorbing its Authority into his own words as well.

In the language of the *Bosi legani* discourses we are going to be analyzing, the Rebbe functions as the *meqabel*, the recipient. He ostensibly has no Authority of his own, but by absorbing the transmission from preceding generations, he has *kol*, everything. Everything, including his own voice. “However, on account of (and via) [the recipient’s stance of] *bittul* (self-abnegation) toward the [source of bestowal], she has everything” (5737, ch. IV). By setting his own voice apart from the earlier rebbes, the Rebbe’s voice takes on a measure of Authority almost independent of and parallel to them, even as he says nothing that they did not already say.

Sources of Authority

We can now return to where we began, with the Rebbe’s note on his father-in-law’s *Bosi legani* discourse regarding “all sevenths [being] beloved,” and its development within the Rebbe’s own *Bosi legani* discourse of 5711 (1951). We noted above that there are two connotations to Moses’ being the seventh saint (in the chain of saints mentioned in the *Bati leganni* Midrash as it emerges from Rayyats’s discourses. One (as implied in the *Drushey khasene* (wedding discourses)) is that Moses brought the presence of the divine down to earth because, having descended six times from six of the seven heavens on account of the saintliness of the six preceding saints, there was now but one step remaining, to descend from the first heaven to earth, and this Moses accomplished being in the position of seventh from Abraham. The second connotation is that there is something unique about being seventh, this unique quality being what enables one to bring the *Shekhinah* down to earth, and this is the import of the Midrashic saying “all sevenths are beloved,” cited in *Bosi legani* by way of explanation of why it was Moses who brought the *Shekhinah* back down. The Rebbe bridges the two connotations by referring to Rayyats’s discourse of *Hakhoydesh* 5700 (1940), in which he emphasizes that as beloved as the seventh might be, the seventh is only seventh because the first one was first.

It bears reemphasizing the foundational import of this issue; once the parallel is drawn by the Rebbe between the era of Moses (the seventh) and his own time (the seventh generation of Ḥabad), the question of how and why the seventh is “beloved” has direct consequences for the Rebbe’s way forward as leader and director of the seventh generation. We will return below to the performance of the idea of “seventh from the first” in the Rebbe’s orientation toward himself, his predecessors and his Hasidim; but first let us consider further the implications of this attitude. The Rebbe’s perception of what was desired, required, achievable and appropriate in response to the personal as well as general exigencies of his flock was drawn from the results of his probing the *Bosi legani* discourse that his father-in-law had had published in anticipation of the day he was to pass on. That this is the case is evidenced by explicit statements of the Rebbe’s to similar effect, such as “in the final series of discourses (*hemshekh*) [*Bosi legani*] which the Rebbe [Rayyats] wrote, he anticipated everything (*hot er alts bavorent*) and alluded to everything”³⁴⁹; “within the discourse for (Rayyats’s) day of ascent (*histalkes* (*histalqut*)) there are many [wondrous] ideas, and your question’s resolution... is, in my humble opinion, at the beginning of the fifth chapter”³⁵⁰; “see... the eleventh chapter [of *Bosi legani*]... a comprehensive directive

³⁴⁹ Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, 2:512.

³⁵⁰ Schneerson, *Igrot qodesh*, 3:243.

regarding the path we must tread...³⁵¹; and “I seek the answers to all the questions people ask among the statements articulated in these discourses.”³⁵²

This, in my estimation, represents the Rebbe’s public stance. As far as the Hasidim were concerned, Rayyats’s instructions to them were contained in his ethical will, the final set of discourses with which he left them. For R. Menachem Mendel himself, there may have been additional sources of “comprehensive directives of the path he must tread,” where Rayyats “anticipated everything” as it related to him personally, and these, I posit, are discovered in the unpacking of the Rebbe’s note on Rayyats’s *Bosi legani*. While I do not have concrete evidence that this is so, I believe a compelling case can be made to this effect, which I will build in the following lines and expand in a later chapter. At a critical juncture in R. Menachem Mendel’s life, faced with a decision about a radical change to his earlier persona and way of life, these sources exerted a crucial influence upon the conclusion he ultimately arrived at. To overlook this element in assessing the path the Rebbe chose would be to misread him in a fundamental way, even as we should not disregard other, more pragmatic considerations.³⁵³

As we have seen above, while not mentioned explicitly in the Rebbe’s note, his understanding of the significance of the seventh as presented in *Bosi legani* is illuminated by how this idea is articulated in the wedding discourses. There are, in fact, several significant instances of intersection between the *Drushey khasene* and *Bosi legani*, which we will elaborate on in a proceeding chapter; this fact in its own right can, at least in retrospect, be read as Rayyats tying the global directives to the Hasidic community as a whole to R. Menachem Mendel personally. It would not be too far a stretch to infer that if Rayyats “anticipated everything” for the direction of Habad going forward after his passing in the *Bosi legani* discourses, he may have also given personal life directive for R. Menachem Mendel himself in the discourses he delivered at the latter’s wedding. Thus R. Menachem Mendel’s decision to take on the role of rebbe and a source for his authority in that capacity may be seen as drawing on these *Drushey khasene*. We have already noted that R. Menachem Mendel explicitly associated the wedding discourses with the singular format of his own *Bosi legani* discourses.

The source that the Rebbe cites explicitly in his note is the discourse *Hakhoydesh* of 5700 (1940). As quoted above, the Rebbe described this discourse as one that Rayyats had said “when he had just arrived in America.” While clearly historically accurate (Rayyats arrived in the New York harbor on March 19, 1940, and the discourse was delivered on the 27 Adar II, April 6, 1940), it is rare for the Rebbe to note the circumstances of a discourse when referencing it. However, the juxtaposition of Rayyats’s arrival in America and the beginning of the Rebbe’s tenure suggests that the Rebbe may have been drawing on this opening teaching which his father-in-law recited as he embarked on his activism in the United States (which differed in certain notable ways from his activities in Europe³⁵⁴), as the Rebbe himself embarked on his own American leadership. This source, Rayyats’s model of leadership in America embodied in the “words of the Living G-d” that he expounded during that era, served as a paradigm upon which

³⁵¹ Ibid, 249.

³⁵² Schneerson, *Hitva’aduyot*, 1:20, fn2.

³⁵³ See Ch Gender, “Der Rebbe Hot Alts Bavorent.”

³⁵⁴ See Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 144 ff. See S.D. Levine, *Toledot Habad be-Artsot Ha-berit* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1988), esp. 284 ff, where he reviews many of the new activities of Rayyats, such as establishing schools for girls, lessons for children in public schools, publication, and messianic activity.

the Rebbe based his own agenda as leader of Ḥabad. It conferred authority on him as the one who purportedly was continuing and actualizing the vision that Rayyats had charted for American Jewish life. This is made nearly explicit in the Rebbe's expansion on the *Hakhoydesh* discourse in his own agenda-setting opening discourse:

[My father-in-law] adds [in *Hakhoydesh*]... that Abraham's self-sacrifice differed from that of Rabbi Akiva... Abraham knew that the priority in his divine service was, as is stated, 'He called there by the name of *Hawayah*, G-d of the world' (Gen. 21:33) – "Do not read *wa-yiqra*' (he called), but *wa-yaqri*' (he had others call)" (b*Sotah*, 10a), *az yener zol oykh shrayen* (that the other should also cry out).³⁵⁵

What is required of each of us is to know that we are the seventh generation. The entire advantage of the seventh is being seventh from the first. The conduct of the first was that... he knew that his entire purpose was to 'Call there by the name of *Hawayah*, G-d of the world.' This is on the model of the patriarch Abraham, who arrived in places where G-dliness was unknown, where Judaism was unknown, where even the *Aleph bet* was unknown, and when there, he put himself aside, and "Do not read 'he called' but 'he had others call'... One must know that if one seeks to "call out" effectively oneself, one must "have others call out." You must ensure that the other not only knows, but also calls out.³⁵⁶

While "the first" in the Ḥabad context would presumably be the *Alter rebbe*, R. Schneur Zalman, it seems quite obvious the figure being described here is Rayyats; he is the "first" to whom the "seventh generation" owes their prestige. He "arrived in places" of Jewish ignorance, namely the profane *goldene medine* (golden country) of the United States, where piety and tradition were superseded by materialism, and his efforts in that land provided the model for the direction of the seventh generation. Indeed, the activism and outreach for which Ḥabad became known under the seventh rebbe's aegis can be seen as encapsulated in these lines of his inaugural discourse.

A third source of authority alluded to in the Rebbe's note was, as mentioned, the note itself. R. Menachem Mendel had been empowered by his father-in-law to insert his own material into the sanctum of the discourse, where the common Hasid dared not tread.³⁵⁷ Such empowerment may be seen as akin to the practice of the second rebbe, R. Dov Ber, who, yet during his father R. Schneur Zalman's lifetime, elaborated further on his father's teachings beyond what R. Schneur Zalman himself was comfortable teaching, and which was later taken as a signal that R. Dov Ber was indeed the destined heir of the seat of leadership.³⁵⁸ Indeed, Ḥabad lore tells of opposition by certain Hasidim to R. Menachem Mendel's insertions because they were seen as somewhat sacrilegious.³⁵⁹ Thus this early incorporation of R. Menachem Mendel's words into *khasides* may have served as an additional indication that he was capable of perpetuating the authority of the previous rebbes.³⁶⁰ It is therefore noteworthy that this pre-leadership footnote of R. Menachem Mendel's was itself incorporated in a comprehensive

³⁵⁵ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:8.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁵⁷ Roth, *Ketsad likro*, 63 ff.

³⁵⁸ Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 107.

³⁵⁹ Cf. R. Leib Schapiro's story about R' Shmuel Levitin, above.

³⁶⁰ See a similar description in Loewenthal, *ibid.*

manner into his first discourse, serving as a fundamental theoretical exposition of the definition of the “seventh generation.”

Finally, the *hemshekh* of *Bosi legani* itself provided the fullest basis for authority. The Rebbe viewed it as a kind of prophetic ethical will, charting out the course Ḥabad Hasidim were to follow in the decades after Rayyats’s demise. It is likely that the Rebbe found allusions within it that he took as directing him to step into the role of successor, in the way the Hasidim did.³⁶¹ But these discourses did more than that; they served as the format through which the Rebbe broadcast his position as heir to Rayyats, and as mouthpiece for all the preceding rebbes, the “golden chain” of Ḥabad. The Rebbe’s annual explications and elaborations upon this *hemshekh* on the anniversary of Rayyats’s passing and his own inauguration was the signal and the realization of his role as perpetuator of Ḥabad, and the Voice of Authority it represents, in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Golden Chain

The Rebbe’s practice of making attributed citations to each of his predecessors in his *Bosi legani* discourses has been noted earlier. These are made often (but not always) in chronological order.³⁶² We have seen how this contrasts with the style of Ḥabad discourses in earlier generations, where a rebbe might deliver a discourse that was essentially a reworking of an earlier rebbe’s discourse without any attribution. This contrast is exemplified by the inspiration for the Rebbe’s format, the above-referenced discourse of *Lekho doydi* that his father-in-law Rayyats delivered at R. Menachem Mendel’s wedding reception. While in his preface to the discourse Rayyats remarked that he would include teachings by all the previous rebbes, one will not find a reference to any other rebbe in the body of the discourse. Only one fluent in the expanse of the Ḥabad corpus would know to identify what thought belonged to whom. Indeed, in a discourse of 5714 (1953) that is based on Rayyats’s *Lekho doydi*, the Rebbe did just that, citing from each rebbe explicitly.³⁶³

It bears elaborating somewhat on this model discourse from the Rebbe’s nuptials. In a momentous prefatory statement to the discourse, which Rayyats later personally transcribed for inclusion in the printed version of his talk, he announced:

It is commonly and widely known that at the celebration of a wedding, the souls of the ancestors arrive from the world of truth... As an invitation to the souls of the *tsadikim*, our illustrious ancestors the sainted rebbes who will be coming to the wedding canopy to bless the couple, we will know recite a *khassides* (discourse), a portion of which is from the Alter Rebbe, a portion from the Mitteler Rebbe... a portion from my father, grandfather of the bride; “One who recites a teaching in the name of its originator (*ba’al ha-shemu’ah*) should envision [themselves] as if the originator stands before them (p*Shabbat*, 1:2.).”³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ See Ch Gender, “Becoming Rebbe.”

³⁶² For example, 5717 cites the rebbes in order; 5737 cites them both in and out of order, except for the Besht and the Maggid who are cited out of order (see addendum).

³⁶³ Schneerson, *Meluqat*, 1:43.

³⁶⁴ Schneerson, *Drushe hatumah*, 15.

Two observations are apposite here. The first is that the reason given by Rayyats for including teachings of each of his forebears here was because to do so was to invite and to make present the authors of these teachings themselves. This end was specific to the situation; as a royal wedding of two descendants of the Ḥabad line, Rayyats wished to channel the presence and blessings of their sainted ancestors. Such a performance does not appear to have been a standard practice of the sixth rebbe's. The second is that the Talmudic dictum cited refers to "recit[ing] a teaching *in the name of* its originator." As noted, Rayyats did not actually make any attributions within the discourse, outside of mentioning the each of the ancestors in his preface. This lends weight to our understanding that the lack of explicit attribution was unnecessary due to the common knowledge and assumption that the contents of any given discourse reflected the traditions of earlier masters.

Why did the Rebbe model *Bosi legani* after this discourse? There is no indication that R. Yosef Yitskhok made any comments to the effect that this was his intention in his discourses in general, or in the *Bosi legani* set specifically. Was the Rebbe "inviting" the holy ancestors to the 10 Shevat *yohrtsayt* commemorations? What was the significance of doing so?

10 Shevat, 5711 (January 17, 1951), was the occasion on which the Rebbe recited his first discourse as rebbe, the first *Bosi legani*, in which he cited teachings from the six preceding rebbes of Ḥabad. On the following Sabbath, 13 Shevat (January 20, 1951), the Rebbe recited his second discourse (beginning *Hayoyshaves beganim* (*Ha-yoshevet be-ganim*, 'You, who sits in the gardens' (Song, 8:13)), based on the second discourse of Rayyats's *hemshekh* of *Bosi legani*) in which he cited teachings from all the rebbes, and included thoughts from the Maggid of Mezeritch and the Ba'al Shem Tov, the putative founders of Hasidism and the precursors to R. Schneur Zalman. Referring to this in a subsequent *sikhe* (talk), the Rebbe explained that since at his wedding his father-in-law had mentioned only the (Ḥabad) rebbes back to R. Schneur Zalman but no further, he was "afraid" to depart from this example. "But it 'bothered' me." Since the *farbrengen* of 13 Shevat was a follow-up to 10 Shevat, the Rebbe redressed what he had omitted during the first discourse, and cited teachings back to the Ba'al Shem Tov. Here R. Menachem Mendel justified his approach with a different rationale than that given by Rayyats: Because "when one is truly distressed over inability to understand the words of *Razal* and one mentions their names and 'one's soul yearns for them etc.' it is beneficial." Additionally, mentioning the names of the rebbes was a way of eliciting "ancestral merit (*zkhuss ovoys*)."³⁶⁵

Here, too, a couple of observations are in order. First, apparently the notion of making the originators of the teaching present through repeating their words would only be adequate justification for citing the rebbes within the Ḥabad line specifically; to cite from the Besht and the Maggid, additional reasons were necessary. Second, in these initial *farbrengens* of the Rebbe at the beginning of his tenure, the tension between loyalty to the model of the forebears and the necessity to innovate is made explicitly obvious. The Rebbe did ultimately deviate somewhat from Rayyats's practice, despite whatever misgivings. The practice of including teachings from the Besht and the Maggid continued throughout all of the subsequent *Bosi legani* discourses as well. In fact, the oft-repeated practice of citing each of the previous rebbes by the Rebbe was

³⁶⁵ Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, 2:515 and in sources cited.

itself an innovation on Rayyats's approach, even as it represented indebtedness to his predecessors.³⁶⁶

Interestingly, one difference between the teaching cited by Rayyats ("one who recites a teaching in the name of its originator") and those cited by R. Menachem Mendel, is that the former teaching emphasizes the presence of the *ba'al ha-shemu'ah* when their teaching is repeated, provided it is attributed, while the teachings regarding distress over inability to understand and desire to arouse ancestral merit are unrelated to ancestral teachings per se and focus especially on articulating their names. For whatever reason, the Rebbe sees himself in particular as requiring additional empowerment to connect with the spiritual heritage of Ḥabad, for which reason he uniquely cites the names of the masters, most notably (but by no means exclusively) in the *Bosi legani* discourses. By the same token, the *zkhus ovoys* sought by R. Menachem Mendel must include linkage to the Besht and the Maggid, and not only those rebbes of the Ḥabad line. The lineage includes specific figures to the exclusion of others, and it must be precisely established, and then invoked. Nevertheless, in his first *maymer* the Rebbe felt it necessary to remain loyal to the model of Rayyats, and only to innovate subsequently. Let us probe a bit further to appreciate the implications of the adoption of this rhetorical strategy.

The device of citing explicitly from each member of the lineage is stylistic, providing a unique format that signals a momentous discourse, as well as exegetical, supplying insight into Rayyats's words in light of those of his forebears. Yet the Rebbe's citing from each of the rebbes is not extraneous to the content of the discourse itself or superimposed onto it, not merely an artifice; rather, the content of the citations fits organically with the import of the discourse. For the Rebbe, the entirety of Ḥabad thought must be in agreement, and furthermore each facet is reflected in every other facet. As we will see, the *Bosi legani* format not only reflects this assumption, but is a thematization of some of the content of the discourse itself.

The above insight operates on both textual and cultural levels. The Ḥabad texts exist in a symbiotic network of mutual illumination, but the texts themselves, as well as their instances of oral delivery, are also particles of Ḥabad social reality. Delivering the discourse enacts the position of rebbehood, and the presence of the teachings of the forebears within the discourse enacts the legitimacy and authority of the rebbe delivering the *maymer* as drawing on and extending the legitimacy and authority of the ancestors.³⁶⁷ In this way, the discourse not only reflects the social reality in which it is expounded, but participates in its production. The rebbe is as much made by the discourse as the discourse is made by the rebbe.

The Rebbe's note on "all seventh's are beloved" in Rayyats's *Bosi legani* thus encapsulates the place the Rebbe may have seen himself as occupying in relation to Rayyats, the legitimizing sources of his stepping into the role of successor to the latter, and a synopsis of the theory through which the Rebbe understood his, and by extension his generation's, significance and purpose. It is an intertextual moment that encompasses the interface between the texts of the

³⁶⁶ See above regarding *Lekha dodi* – 5714. This practice was repeated on other occasions as well; see Schneerson, *Meluqat*, 1:31 (discourse beginning *Ekhah*); *ibid*, 43 (two discourses of Rosh Hashanah). Schneerson, *Hitva'aduyot* – 5746, 27 ff. regarding mentioning the names of the rebbes and their niggunim on Rosh Hashanah. See "Pidyon Nefesh: Regenerating the Connection," A Chassidisher Derher (Tishrei 5775), 17, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://derher.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/tishrei5775.pdf>, regarding the practice of the Rebbe's to mention each of the rebbes in the Rosh Hashanah *maymer*.

³⁶⁷ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. I, v, fn31.

discourses of Rayyats, from the wedding discourse to *Hakhoydesh* to *Bosi legani*, between Rayyats's discourse and the Rebbe's own, between their discourses and those of the generations that had gone before them. Congruent with the intertextuality and emerging directly from it is the social reality of the Rebbe's empowerment as rebbe and the positioning of that status in relation to his predecessors as well as his Hasidim. Thus, returning to Kronfeld's objection to a unilateral direction of influence, the Rebbe displays the capacity of the *meqabel* to create and innovate. In the following chapter we will examine selections of the texts themselves to see how these interfaces are accomplished in action.

Chapter 5 – *Biṭṭul* – To Be and Not to Be

If Agnon, despite participating in a shared universe of discourse and canon as are the texts of Ḥabad speculation, cannot be said to engage in midrashic intertextuality, let us take a closer look at how the *Bosi legani* discourses that are the focus of this endeavor exhibit the notion of bringing the sources closer. I will present several passages from the discourse here and do a careful reading of them. (I am advisedly not calling my reading “close,” though this adjective is often used for the careful parsing of a text. More accurately, a close reading is one that focuses on the text alone, to the exclusion of anything “outside” the text. My contention here is precisely that the Rebbe’s texts, and by extension, his world, cannot be understood except as situated within the context of the Ḥabad legacy and as assuming the entirety of the Ḥabad corpus at every moment. Thus neither the Rebbe’s parsing of the heritage of his predecessors nor my interpretation of such can be deemed to be “close.”) In the course of the reading I will offer an interpretation of some of the implications from the texts themselves, their uses of their sources, and their relationship to one another. These will allow us to notice the moments of “bringing close,” and where the Hasid hears words that are “living,” real and life-impacting. I have chosen three passages, one from the seventh chapter of Rayyats’s *Bosi legani*, and two from the associated discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977) by the Rebbe.

Our excursus into the texts of the *maymorim* will enable to observe their singular fusion of form and content, as well as of text and context, displaying the phenomenon of thematization on a very comprehensive level. The notion of *biṭṭul* referenced earlier which resides at the center of the Maggid of Mezeritch’s conception of spirituality, the achievement of “the annihilation of the self [and] self-dissolution in the Divine,” receives special focus and interpretation in the texts that we will be analyzing. This concept, related to effacement, will be found to be the pivotal one that enables the perpetuation of the Voice of Authority and the erasure of barriers between the divine and the prosaic and between past, present, and future. It is the bedrock that undergirds the midrashic intertextuality and the central idea that allows it to operate in the Ḥabad texts and their lived contexts.

Before discussing the content of Chapter Seven of Rayyats’s *Bosi legani* and the Rebbe’s insights into it, we would do well to define several key terms and concepts in the universe of Ḥabad thought that are fundamental to its outlook in general, and to understanding the ideas mentioned here in particular.³⁶⁸ Following the presentation of these concepts, I will summarize the basic outlines of the first two discourses in Rayyats’s *hemshekh*, followed by a summary of the Rebbe’s presentation of themes in Chapter Seven.³⁶⁹ We will then be able to go on to carefully read and parse selections of these texts.

³⁶⁸ For an overview of Ḥabad understandings of kabbalistic concepts, see J. Immanuel Schochet, *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*.

³⁶⁹ The discourses of Rayyats are available in English translation in Uri Kaploun, trans., *Basi LeGani*. Sources for many of the references made in the course of this summary can also be found in my translation of the material on the seventh chapter in the addendum of the current work.

Key Terms

As noted at the outset, Ḥabad thought discourses in the world of the Kabbalah. A significant amount of their terminology is drawn from the mystical literature, albeit treated from a specifically Ḥabad perspective. One such concept is that of the Ten Sephirot.³⁷⁰

Sephirot, Worlds, and *Hishtalshelut*

The Kabbalists recognize a system of ten divine emanations, termed “Sephirot,” which constitute the framework for creation to occur. These are (in the Ḥabad system³⁷¹): *hokhmah* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), *da‘at* (knowledge), *hessed* (benevolence), *gevurah* (might), *tif’eret* (beauty), *nezah* (victory), *hod* (glory), *yesod* (foundation), and *malkhut* (sovereignty). Ḥabad thinking reiterates regularly that these emanations or attributes find their counterparts within the human psyche and may be understood through close consideration of the function of these elements within the human soul. The first three Sephirot are thus called the “intellectual” Sephirot, while the latter seven are the “emotional.”³⁷² Each Sephirah is understood to comprise within itself the entire system of ten as well, so that we can speak of *hessed* of *hessed*, *gevurah* of *hessed*, and so forth. Preceding and “encompassing” the system of the Sephirot is the quasi-Sephirah of *keter* (crown), which itself consists of two levels, *‘atiq* or *‘atiq yomin* (ancient of days) (Cf. Daniel, 7:9), also known as *‘atiqa qadisha* (the holy ancient one), and *‘arikh* or *‘arikh ‘anpin* (the major visage, also a hyperliteral translation of the Biblical Hebrew term “*‘erekh ‘apayim*,” which translates as “slow to anger” or “forbearing”). These are understood to correspond to the human faculties of delight and will, respectively. The Sephirot work together as a system by which the pristine divine light of the *’Ēn sof* (Endless One) is filtered and coarsened so that it may produce the created universe with its limitations. In a broader sense, this gradual descent of the light occurs through its transition via four worlds, which will be addressed momentarily. At this point let us note that the names of the Sephirot are not adequate to fully express what they represent, and to do so is beyond the scope of our current discussion. We will, however, spend some space on the last two Sephirot, *yesod* and *malkhut*, below, after first expanding the scope of our synopsis of kabbalistic cosmology.³⁷³

The Ten Sephirot exist within a larger scheme of four worlds, each of which consists of these same ten attributes according to its unique character.³⁷⁴ Like the Sephirot, these worlds represent the chain of downward influence from the divine itself to the tangible universe of human experience. The four worlds are the worlds of *’Ašilut* (emanation), *Beri’ah* (creation), *Yeširah* (formation), and *’Asiyah* (completion). *’Ašilut* is characterized as a world of divinity, meaning a world unified with the divine and without a distinct identity apart from it. *Beri’ah* is

³⁷⁰ Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 59 ff. for a fuller discussion of the Sephirot. Schochet, “Iggeret Hakodesh,” 506 ff. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 205 ff for a discussion of the significance of the Sephirot in the Zohar, and 244 ff for the Lurianic understanding.

³⁷¹ See Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 69 fn38 regarding the question of whether *keter* is considered one of the Sephirot.

³⁷² Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” 10 ff.

³⁷³ See Schochet, *ibid*, 91-95.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 105 ff. The Chassidic Heritage Series, *The Four Worlds: A Letter by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch*, trans. Yosef Marcus (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2003).

the first of the so-called created worlds, in which an identity has formed that is distinguished from that of the deity. This realm is also associated with the Upper Garden of Eden (*gan 'eden ha-'elyon*) while *Yeşirah* is associated with the Lower Garden of Eden (*gan 'eden ha-tahton*). The lowest realm of *'Asiyah* includes both a spiritual component as well as an additional physical, tangible component. Each world's own Sephirotic system receives the divine light in turn from the Ten Sephirot in the world above them. The four worlds are generally broken down into the divisions of *'Aşilut*, the world of divinity, and *BeY'A* (*Beri'ah, Yeşirah, 'Asiyah*), the created worlds. This system taken together is referred to as *seder hishtalshelut*, the “order of lowering,” a hierarchical concatenation of levels or gradations by which the divine light descends into progressively less enlightened realms.

Şimşum and Biṭṭul

The system of worlds and *hishtalshelut* is brought into existence from a realm that is beyond createdness and hierarchy, beyond the system. The process of transition from undifferentiated divinity to graded distinct existence, what the mystics call “worlds,” is said to begin with a moment of *şimşum*, constriction.³⁷⁵ In the words of the sixteenth-century Safed Kabbalist R. Isaac Luria:

Before the emanated beings were emanated and the created beings created, a lofty, undifferentiated light filled all existence, and there was no cleared space... That [light] is called the Light of the Infinite (*'ôr 'ên sof*). When it arose in His undifferentiated will to create worlds... He then constricted Himself, the Infinite, at His core point... and He constricted that light, and it was distanced to the sides surrounding the middle point. Then there remained a cleared space and an empty atmosphere and hollowness... Then there was a place in which beings could be emanated and created... (*'Ēş ḥayyim*, 1:2)

The constriction described here is called *şimşum ha-rishon*, the original constriction, and is conceived of as total eclipse of the divine light. There are many additional constrictions that are posited between each world and gradation, these serving to dim rather than to completely occlude the light. Through them the light is progressively diminished so that it not overwhelm the “space” that it enters and thereby negate it. This is what is meant by there being “no cleared space (*maqôm panûy*)”; the creation of entities that view themselves as distinct from the divine essence could not occur. By constricting the divine light, the Infinite creates the possibility for there to be existence with a sense of independence.³⁷⁶

The concept of the divine constriction, *şimşum*, as well as the potential abnegation of the creations when confronted with the divine essence in its full truth, relate to a key term in Ḥabad thought, *biṭṭul*. This term, common in rabbinic Hebrew, refers to an entity being annulled or becoming so insignificant as to be irrelevant. In the Kabbalistic and Hasidic contexts this term may be defined as abnegation of the self, a state in which an entity loses its sense of selfhood in

³⁷⁵ Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 47-57. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 244 ff.

³⁷⁶ See Nisan Mangel, “*Shaar Hayichud VebaEmunah*,” in Kehot Publication Society, *Tanya*, 318 ff, that this *şimşum* should not be understood literally. See at length Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sha'are Emunah: Teshuvot u-be'urim be-yesodot ve-iqare ha-emunah* (Jerusalem: Hekhal Menahem, 1991), 74-75, regarding the various opinions on this issue.

the presence of an awareness of a greater reality that overwhelms it. This sense of *biṭṭul* may be imposed by outside circumstances, but it may also be a product of an individual's striving for enlightenment in which they develop such awareness within themselves. In a related manner, the divine act of *šimšum* (*tsimtsum*) is one of *biṭṭul* as well, so to speak, since it involves the removal of self and creation of space for another. We noted above that this concept is a cornerstone in the thought of the Maggid, and inherited as such by R. Schneur Zalman, founder of Ḥabad.

Yesôd and Malkhût

Returning to the Sephirot, a Zoharic passage correlates the various Sephirot with respective bodily limbs: “*Hessed* is the right arm, *gevurah* is the left arm... *yesôd* is the terminus of the torso, the sign of the holy covenant (circumcision, i.e. phallus); *malkhût* is the mouth, we call it the Oral Torah” (*Tiqqunê zohar*, 17a). *Yesôd* represents desire, communication, bestowal to a receptive beneficiary, the locus of union of giver and receiver. It is the channel by way of which the lights of the upper Sephirot are transmitted to the recipient, *malkhut*, in a manner often analogized as human copulation.

Malkhut, perhaps the most colorful of the Sephirot, is the level at which the higher energies are realized and implemented. It is associated with speech, as alluded to in the above passage of *Tiqquney zohar*, on the basis of the verse ‘For the word of the king rules’ (Ecc. 8:4). “The world was created by ten utterances” (mAvot, 5:1); *malkhut*, as the divine word, is the impetus for creation. It represents the feminine aspect, recipient of the bounty of the upper Sephirot via *yesod*, and birthing from it all worlds and creations. It represents the recipient par excellence. Among other appellations, *malkhut* is identified with *Shekhinah*, the divine presence.

The prominence of *Shekhinah* in all this cannot be overstated. As the tenth and final Sephirah, it is *shokhen*, dwelling within the nether realm, rather than transcending it. Thus its appellation *Shekhinah* points to *Malkhut*'s character as the divine light which extends down into the realms of creation. In this conception, the element of *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah* is the source of existence and life in each world; this gives us multiple levels of *Shekhinah*, according to the character of each world it inhabits.

Letters, Divine Names, and *Hamshakhah*

The notion of the divine word that is *malkhut*, the source of the “ten utterances” by which “the world was created,” gives rise to what may be termed the Ḥabad theory of letters as laid out in the second section of the book of Tanya, called “The Gate of Unity and of Faith.”³⁷⁷ Briefly this theory states that all of reality is composed of the letters of the divine word, which is constantly infusing all that is with existence and life. These letters are those of the “ten utterances,” namely the story of creation found in Genesis, 1. The letters may be substituted,

³⁷⁷ See Tzahi Weiss, *Sefer Yesirah and Its Contexts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), about the unique contribution of *Sefer Yetsirah* to the concept of creative letters. See Ariel Evan Mayse, *Speaking Infinities: God and Language in the Teachings of Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), for a study of the Maggid's theories of language which informed those of R. Schneur Zalman.

exchanged, or transposed according to various methods of exchange taught by the Kabbalists. Ultimately, every entity has its personal letters that “spell out” the vivifying power that animates it, and this is the entity’s name; “This, its name by which it is called in the Holy Tongue, is the vessel for the life condensed into the letters of this name, which has descended from the Ten Utterances in the Torah.”³⁷⁸ For this reason, an analysis of a name in the Holy Tongue, including of its constituent letters, will yield insight into the essence of the entity which it names. This theory also serves to distinguish between the Hebrew language (the Holy Tongue (*leshon ha-qodesh*)) and other “foreign” or secular languages, in that the language of the Torah is an ontological one, while other languages are merely conventional. The Torah as a whole, including its orthography and its word-choices, is dynamic, conveying divine power to the created realm, and is not merely a representation of realities that are distinct from the words that describe them, as is the case in other language and writing.³⁷⁹

The theory of letters is closely connected to the significance of the divine names (*shemot*; sing. *shem*). The Rabbis identified a set of names that refer to the deity “that may not be erased,”³⁸⁰ due to their being seen as appellations for the divine rather than descriptors. In Jewish mystical thought these names are the subject of meditation and are ascribed great power, and they are supposed to confer miraculous abilities upon the one sufficiently virtuous and initiated into their meaning. The Kabbalists contemplate these names at great length, probing multiple aspects of their meaning, numerical values (*gimatriya*), the letters they are composed of, and so forth.

In Ḥabad discourse the divine names are a ubiquitous element of the discussion. Focus falls especially on the two names most commonly used in the Jewish Bible: the Tetragrammaton, which the Kabbalists and in their wake the Hasidic masters present as *Hawayah* (the four letters having been transposed), and *E-lohim*, or *Elokim* in pious pronunciation. R. Schneur Zalman interprets the implications of these names thus:

The divine name *Hawayah* means “He brings all into being (*me-haweh*)” ex nihilo... this being the vitality that is bestowed literally at every moment within all creations from ‘that which emerges from G-d’s mouth’ (Deut. 8:3) and His spirit and creates them... The divine name *E-lohim* is the name of the attribute of severity and *šimšum*. It therefore has the numerical equivalent of [the word] *ha-teva*’ (nature), for it obscures the light from above that brings the world into existence and gives it life, so that it appears as if the world is sustained and conducted through the path of nature.³⁸¹

Hawayah is thus the name associated with bestowal and unlimited power, while *E-lohim* connotes restraint and the limitation of power. These names are typically presented in binary fashion, as revelation and concealment, infinity and limitation, miracle and nature, bestowal and withdrawal, and so on.

³⁷⁸ Mangel, “Shaar Hayichud,” 294.

³⁷⁹ See the discussion in Riffaterre, “Interpretation and Undecidability,” of semiotics vs correspondence, the claim that language can never actually “mean” the object we assume it refers to. This view is contested by the theory of letters outlined here; see Ch. Gender, “The Ḥabad Theory of Letters,” at greater length.

³⁸⁰ See *bShavu’ot*, 35a; Maimonides, *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Torah Fundamentals, 6:2.

³⁸¹ Mangel, “Shaar Hayichud,” 302; *ibid*, 306-08. See places referenced in Schneerson, *Mareh meqomot*, 357 and 369.

The divine names are associated by the kabbalists with the Ten Sephirot, each name corresponding to another Sephirah.³⁸² In this way, the particular name that is used in a given scriptural verse is never taken for granted, but is rather considered pivotal for the action described therein. Furthermore, with regard to the Tetragrammaton, an oft-recurring notion in Ḥabad writing is that its letters encapsulate the entirety of the Sephirotic schema (*yod* = *ḥokhmah* (wisdom), initial *hey* = *binah* (understanding), *waw* = the six Sephirot from *ḥessed* (benevolence) through *yesod* (foundation), and final *hey* = *malkhut* (sovereignty)). As seen from the Tanya citation above, the name *E-lohim* is related to the attribute of severity (*gevurah*); it is likewise related to the final Sephirah of *malkhut*, which is also considered a locus of occlusion and circumscription.

As we have described the Sephirot and worlds referred to by the Kabbalists as a dynamic system akin to a body, we can appreciate a further notion which posits a reciprocal nature within this system. Each element or “level” within the system contributes to and is enhanced by all other elements. Moreover, Kabbalistic cosmology ascribes a fundamental role to the human individual as someone that can affect and influence the reciprocity of the system, thereby engendering its health. Particularly, as will be seen in the overview of the discourses, there is great importance placed on channeling the divine energies into the physical realm. The dynamic of reciprocal influence and of the circulation of beneficent energy is encapsulated in the term “*hamshakhah* (pl. *hamshakhot*),” meaning drawing down or channeling. The individual draws divinity down upon themselves and into their physical environment through good deeds, and the various Sephirot and worlds draw from one to another, including through the facilitation of the human being’s prayer and ritual observance. As regards the theory of letters, the dynamism of the Hebrew letters and language is defined by their status as *hamshakhot*, channels for the divine light.

It is worth noting that the dynamic of *hamshakhah* can occur as an elicitation from “below,” e.g. human efforts “awaken” and draw forth illumination from the divine realm, but the term may also connote a process within the “giver” that occurs automatically, meaning that the *mahpi’a* draws down the *hamshakhah* from within themselves not in response to or commensurate with the efforts of the recipient. The use of this concept within Ḥabad thought often leaves the matter of who prompts the *hamshakhah* with a degree of ambiguity. Given that the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive, I believe that it is worth preserving this ambiguity in translating the Ḥabad texts where possible.

Let us now turn to the discourses themselves.

Summaries of *Bosi legani*

The first discourse of Rayyats’s *hemshekh* begins with the verse at Song of Songs, 5:1, ‘I have come to my garden, my sister, the bride,’ which verse provides the appellation for the discourse (*dibbur hamaskhil*), and for the *hemshekh* as a whole. Rayyats then cites a Midrashic commentary on this verse, attributed to Song of Songs Rabbah, which maintains that the primary locus of the presence of the divine (‘*iqar shekhinah* (*iker shkhine*)) was in the nether realms, but

³⁸² See at length Menakhem Mendel Schneersohn, *Derekh mitsvotekha*, revised ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1996), 115b ff.

that on account of the sin at the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 3) and subsequent offenses, the divine presence was removed from the earth, and it ascended with each progressive sin from heaven to heaven until reaching the seventh heaven. Following this, seven saintly individuals (*tsadikim*) each in their time, beginning with Abraham, succeeded in drawing the *Shekhinah* down by degrees, until Moses, the seventh, succeeded in drawing the *Shekhinah* back to earth. This feat was fully realized in the presence that inhabited the wilderness sanctuary that Moses had built, and continued to be embodied by the temple in Jerusalem.

Rayyats then translates this concept into personal terms, noting that every individual is enjoined to be a temple for the divine through their divine service (as discussed in the previous chapter). That the *Shekhinah* should make its primary dwelling within each individual is associated with the Zoharic dictum that “when the Other Side (*sitra ahara* (*sitro akhro*)) is subdued, the glory of the Holy One ascends throughout all worlds.” Personal subjugation of negative impulses effects the drawing down (*hamshakhah*) of a light that is “throughout all worlds,” which Rayyats interprets as a divine light that is present in all worlds *equally*, implying a light that does not differentiate between worlds on account of its utter transcendence. This principle is associated with the sacrificial service in the Temple, the offering up of animals corresponding to subduing the “Other Side,” the source of the bestial tendencies within humanity, and the divine favor that such offering elicits corresponding to the “glory... throughout all worlds.”

The lens of the personal sanctuary within each individual is now turned to examine more closely the materials from which the original Tabernacle was said to be built. Two key biblical terms are scrutinized for their significance in this connection: *‘asê shittim* (acacia wood), the type of wood to be used for constructing the walls of the portable temple, and *qeresh* (board), the finished panel fashioned from the acacia wood (see Exodus 26:15). The noun *shittim* is linked by Rayyats to the word *shetut*, folly, bringing to mind the Talmudic truism that “A person does not transgress unless possessed by a spirit of folly (*ru’ah shetut*).” Constructing one’s inner sanctuary from *shittim* wood means transforming sin-inducing folly into *shetut de-qedushah* (*shetus dikdushe*), “holy folly,” exerting oneself in the performance of holy deeds beyond the limits of one’s habit, comfort, or dignity.³⁸³

As noted earlier, the Ḥabad discourse is characterized by its incorporation of Kabbalistic constructs, which serve an end unto themselves as the “revelation of the internality of the Torah,” as well as a source of exhortation and motivation to piety, in the way a traditional *darshan* might use a Midrashic story in their sermon. In the discourse just summarized this method is evident, as it draws on and expatiates upon Zoharic concepts such as “subjugation of the Other Side” in order to build its argument toward its moralistic message. The discourse establishes the notions that the biblical sanctuary is mirrored within the individual soul, that the

³⁸³ Not to be confused with concept of “holy fool” in Orthodox Christianity. Ivanov defines the term as “a person who feigns insanity... by his deliberate unruliness... The holy fool voluntarily takes upon himself the mask of insanity in order that he may thereby conceal his own perfection from the world and hence avoid the vanity of worldly praise” (Sergey A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, trans. Simon Franklin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1. In the Jewish context, while inapplicable here, there is room to consider parallels with e.g. the conduct of the acolytes the Hasidic *tsadik* R. Abraham of Kalisk (see *Igrot qodesh Admor Ha-zaqen, Admor Ha-emtsa’i, Admur Ha-Tsemah Tsedeq* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1987), 126), or that of the students of the yeshivah of Novogradok (see Jacobson, *Zikaron li-vne yisrael*, 85); this, however, lies beyond our scope. See Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 169-71.

habitation of the divinity that is “throughout all worlds equally” within the individual is achieved through the subjugation of the “Other Side,” and that the effort of constructing the internal sanctuary consists of transforming sinful folly (*sheṭut de-le’umat zeh* (*shtus dileumas ze*)) into holy folly (*shtus dikdushe*). The first *Bosi legani* discourse thus exhorts the Hasid to restrain their animal impulses, as well as to observe the dictates of Judaism with a devotion that exceeds the bonds of duty.

The second discourse picks up on these themes, now focusing on the significance of the word *qeresh*, the sanctuary panel, and its latent significance. As the basic building block of the Tabernacle, it serves as the model for the construction of the inner sanctuary in the heart of the individual. Rayyats notes that the word *qeresh* comprises three Hebrew letters: *qoph* (ק), *resh* (ר), and *shin* (ש). The first two letters are deemed by the Zohar as being from the negative side. As the subject of this portion of the discourse provides the material upon which the Rebbe’s discourses on Chapter Seven are based (*meyusad*), we will present them in some detail here.³⁸⁴

Rayyats expounds that the letters *qoph* and *resh* correspond to two letters on the holy side, to which they bear similarity in their visual representation: *resh* (ר) corresponding to *dalet* (ד) and *qoph* (ק) to *hê* (ה). The names of both letters *dalet* and *resh* relate to Hebrew words for poverty; *dal/dalut* (destitute/tion) and *rash/reyshut* (impoverished/ment). The *dalet* is considered holy because it possesses a miniscule appendage at its rear, identified as the letter *yod* (י), which represents diminishment and humility. Poverty that is humble is receptive to all manner of beneficence. An analogy for this is a disciple who, when engaged in absorbing a lesson from the master, must completely abnegate themselves. The letter *resh*, on the other hand, lacks the *yod* of self-diminishment, and therefore the capacity to receive. Another connotation of the letter *yod* located at the *dalet*’s rear is its association with the Sefirah of *yesod*, also called *kol*, which “unites heaven and earth”. It indicates that the holy realm “possesses all (*kol*)” by virtue of this *yod*, whereas the “*rash* (pauper/letter *resh*) lacks all (*kol*).” Whatever the unholy possesses is really a deficiency, as it only causes greater arrogance.

The full benefit of the *dalet*’s capacity to receive is unfurled in the letter *hê*, which is shaped like a *dalet* with a *yod* inside of it, rather than at its rear. Thus the use of the *qeresh* as the material for the walls of the tabernacle signifies the transformation of the negative connotations of its constituent letters into the positive significance of their counterparts on the “side of the holy.” On a related note, the letters of *qeresh* also spell *sheqer*, falsehood, once again indicating that the tabernacle is constructed by transforming the negative.

Constructing a temple for the divine by transforming falsehood and negativity is a task that is uniquely assigned to Israel, humans in the physical realm, rather than to angels. The conclusion of the second discourse highlights the advantage that humans have over angels by recourse to the appellation given the Israelites at their exodus from Egypt, *ṣib’ot Hawayah*, the hosts of G-d. The word *ṣaba* (host, army) is analyzed, Rayyats pointing to its three connotations of “military,” “time allotment,” and “beauty,” concluding that one is to serve G-d with the disciplined obedience associated with the military, using one’s time in this life to its fullest, and with the recognition that no individual is whole without the contributions of others. The contents of the third and fourth *Bosi legani* discourses need not be summarized here.

³⁸⁴ References for quotes and concepts mentioned here are given below in the summaries of the Rebbe’s discourses.

The second discourse thus further textures the notion of transformation of evil introduced in the first discourse, highlighting particular negative characteristics and their positive counterparts, such as arrogance and humility (represented by the *resh* and *dalet* respectively), destructive thought and speech resulting in destructive action, as opposed to productive thought, speech, and action (represented respectively by the letters *qoph* and *hê*), and the like. It further emphasizes the unique opportunity that physical existence embodies when it comes to accessing the divine, an idea that aligns with the original teaching of *Bosi legani* that “the primary locus of the *shekhinah* was below.” Here we once again see Zoharic teachings, such as those on the significance of the letters, and more broadly the “theory of letters” with its basis in *Sefer yeşirah*, serve as the impetus for piety and a Hasidic ethos, the latter in turn contributing to the cosmic objective of revealing divinity within the world.

5717

The two *Bosi legani* discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977) by the seventh rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel, which center on the seventh chapter of Rayyats’s series *Bosi legani – 5710* (1950), pick up on intimations in Rayyats’s words, accentuating several different themes that emerge from them. As mentioned, this chapter comprises a portion of the discussion on the contrasts between the letters *dalet* and *resh*. The pivotal principle upon which the discussion turns relates to the formal difference between these two letters, namely the addition of a smidgen (*yod*) at the rear of the letter *dalet* that is lacking in the letter *resh*.

In the discourse *Bosi legani – 5717*, the Rebbe notes that Rayyats actually defines the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* in two ways, each exhibiting the characteristic of *biṭṭul*: the recipient must diminish themselves in the manner of the point-like *yod* to receive, and the giver must constrict their bounty to a point in order to transmit it to the recipient. This second interpretation of the *yod* paints it as an initial constriction which allows for subsequent expansion, rather than withdrawal as an ideal in its own right.³⁸⁵ Thus the Rabbis state that “The world to come was created by the letter *yod*” (b*Menahot*, 29b), suggesting that the fully unfurled world in which souls are enabled to ‘gaze upon the pleasantness of the L-rd’ (Ps. 27:4) results from an initial point of divine revelation.

Beyond the *yod* as a representation of the *biṭṭul* of recipient as well as of benefactor, there is a third aspect to which the *yod* alludes: the ninth Sefirah, *yesod*. This Sefirah is defined in the phrase ‘For all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth [is Yours]’ (I Chron. 29:11), according to its Targumic paraphrase, ‘that grasps/unites heaven and earth.’³⁸⁶ *Yesod* represents the union of bestower and recipient, as it is a Sefirah that is said to reach to the highest heights, and to descend to the lowest depths.³⁸⁷

Thus far the interpretation of the *dalet*, a letter of the side of the holy, associated with communication, especially in the ultimate state of the future messianic epoch, when the divine

³⁸⁵ Associated with teachings by the Besht and the Maggid (see translation of discourses in addendum, and discussion below).

³⁸⁶ See endnote in my translation of the discourse, Ch V.

³⁸⁷ Based on a teaching by R. Schneur Zalman.

word will be fully revealed.³⁸⁸ This contrasts with the state of affairs on the opposite side, symbolized by the letter *resh*; this letter and facet lacks the *yod*, the conjoining Sefirah of *yesod*. This circumstance is alluded to in the phrase ‘But the impoverished (*rash*) had not *kol* (anything)’ (II Sam. 12:3). This is the situation of the exilic era, when the divine word is utterly concealed.³⁸⁹ This is represented by the final letter *hê* of the name *Hawayah*, representing the Sefirah of *malkhut* and the divine word, being sundered from the letter *waw* that precedes it, which letter connotes the drawing down of divine revelation from above. This condition is expressed by the words ‘*ne’elamti dumiyaḥ heḥesheti* (I have become mute, still; I have become silent)’ (Ps. 39:3), a phrase forming the acrostic for the word *niddah*, the menstruant who is separated from her husband, which word may also be read *nad hê*, the (final) *hê* (of *Hawayah*) has been made to wander. This is the reverse from the state of union facilitated by *yesod*.

The above is exemplified in the distinction between Jacob and Esau. Jacob said, ‘I have *kol* (everything)’ (Gen. 33:11), the aspect of *kol* which unites heaven and earth, while Esau said, ‘I have much (*rav*)’ (ibid, 9), indicating multiplicity and division. Furthermore, Esau’s is only apparent bounty, for in reality “the one that is great (*rav*) is indeed small” (Zohar), since this plenty is mere material wealth, which is of quite secondary importance. Ultimately, in fact, material plenty results in diminishment, for in the course of the pursuit of luxuries one risks losing even their physical necessities.³⁹⁰ In general, in the realm of the profane, abundance induces greater self-aggrandizement. Even as all abundance stems from the holy realm, which is characterized by humility, the realm of the profane does not truly absorb this influence; rather, it remains within the unholy in a state of exile, for this realm lacks the self-diminishment of the *yod* and is therefore not a ready receptacle for the revelation of divinity.³⁹¹

The discourse of 5717 (1957) thus amplifies the themes Rayyats discourses upon (drawing on teachings from each of the previous rebbes), highlighting the fundamental distinction between that which is holy, desirable, and true, and that which is profane, objectionable, and illusory: namely, the quality of humility and self-abnegation (*biṭṭul*) that results from the awareness of the divine as the source of all existence. While the Rebbe, too, exhorts to virtue via notions derived from the Kabbalah, he also conveys a metamessage: that the words of his predecessor are built on and are only fully comprehended in light of the teachings of all the rebbes that preceded him.

An additional meta-directive is expressed in this discourse, in turn disclosing how this same meta-insight is already present in the discourse of Rayyats, relating to the circumstance of a rebbe delivering a discourse: the Hasid/disciple must set aside their self-awareness and focus exclusively on absorbing the words of the discourse, while the rebbe/master is engaged in condensing and filtering his own wisdom in order to convey a productive message that can be assimilated by the Hasidim. As we will elaborate later, this conception suggests a meta-insight of even broader proportions, articulating the import of the relationship between the Rebbe and his father-in-law and that of the *Bosi legani* project and the authority it represents as a whole.

³⁸⁸ As elaborated by R. Dov Ber.

³⁸⁹ As elaborated by *Tsemakh tsedek*.

³⁹⁰ As elaborated by Maharash.

³⁹¹ As elaborated by Rashab.

The discourse of *Bosi legani – 5737* (1977) revisits the seventh chapter, expanding its discussion into new areas of application. In this discourse, the Rebbe focuses particularly on the implications of the Sefirah of *yesod*. There is *yesod* as it exists within the first Sefirah of *ḥokhmah*, referred to as *yesod abba* (*yesod* of the Father); this is the *yod* indicated in the phrase “The world to come was created by the letter *yod*.” This upper *yesod* influences and extends down to the ninth Sefirah of *yesod*, implied in the phrase ‘For all that is in heaven and on earth [is Yours],’ which is then drawn down into the rear of the *dalet* in the form of the *yod*-like point at its rear, representing the tenth Sefirah of *malkhut*, described as “having nothing (*de-let*) of her own at all” (Zohar).³⁹² The system of effluence within and from *yesod* and its reception within *malkhut* is the fundamental property which distinguishes the letter *dalet* (the realm of the holy) from the letter *resh* (the opposite realm).

The reason why this above-described dynamic is significant is because it points to a fundamental principle: the state of *biṭṭul* represented in the *dalet* is merely a precursor for a subsequent unfurling of potential. This principle is exemplified in the idea that the purpose of the *tsimtsum* is to allow for the extension of a “line” (*qaw*) of divine light into the empty space.³⁹³ Particularly, the initial *tsimtsum* (*tsimtsum horishen*) which achieved complete removal of the light from the space of creation exhibits this duality, for this utter removal enabled the emergence of the Sephiroic “vessels” which absorb the light of the *qaw*, and eventually are capable of taking in the unlimited light that preceded the *tsimtsum*. Thus the initial removal is what enables subsequent revelation to the greatest extent. On an individual level this principle is instantiated in the notion that the objective of one’s sense of self-abnegation is to enable them to then create a dwelling for the divine below via the observance of the Torah.

This same principle is enacted on the level of personal behavior. There is a mode of divine service that is described as “posterior (*’aḥor*),” suggested by the verse ‘After the L-rd your G-d shall you walk’ (Deut. 13:5). This path of conduct is associated with the created worlds of *BeY’A*, where worldly existence is a given while it is divinity that is worthy of note. Divine service in this manner is analogous to the light that extends downward via the *tsimtsum*. Even in this inferior mode, one’s service must be infused with the aspect of “anteriority (*panim*),” associated with the world of *’Ašilut*, where divinity is fully manifest. In practice this means that one’s service to the divine is driven by their contemplation of the state of the interiority of their soul, which is always in a state of *panim*-consciousness.³⁹⁴

Having identified the principle of diminution as a precursor to unlimited expansion on the cosmic scale, the personal level, and the plane of divine service, the Rebbe goes on to apply it in the realms of soul-levels and of Torah study. As regards soul-levels, there are souls that are rooted in the created worlds of *BeY’A*, and loftier souls associated with *’Ašilut*. Yet, even souls of *BeY’A* possess at their core the consciousness of true divine oneness (*Hawayah eḥad*), due to a glimmer of *’Ašilut* that is drawn down to them, as articulated in the statement of the twelve tribes

³⁹² Drawing on teachings by R. Schneur Zalman. He puns here on *dalet/de-let*.

³⁹³ As arises from teachings by the Besht and the Maggid.

³⁹⁴ See at length Zalman I. Posner, “Kuntres Acharon,” in Kehot Publication Society, *Tanya*, 692-98, regarding the topic of *panim* and *’aḥor*.

(BeY'A) to their father Jacob ('*Ašilut*), “Just as there is only one in your heart, so there is but one in our hearts” (b*Pesaḥim*, 56a).³⁹⁵

As regards the study of Torah, there are various approaches to Torah study, as conveyed by the terms “inheritance,” “not an inheritance,” “gift,” “bride.” Study termed “inheritance” refers to one’s toil to understand the Torah, through which one achieves comprehension and a concomitant revelation of divinity commensurate with their efforts; this may be compared to an heir who, although receiving that which they did not labor for, is nevertheless eligible to inherit on account of a prior connection to the estate. Once one achieves this level of Torah, they are granted the level of Torah termed “gift,” namely a divine bestowal that transcends all limitation and therefore any commensurability with the extent of their toil.³⁹⁶ The distinction between Torah as inheritance or gift correlates with the differentiation between the “revealed” (legalistic, pedestrian) Torah, the “posteriority” of Torah, and the “inner (*penimiyut*)” (esoteric, restricted) Torah, the “anteriority (*panim*)” of Torah. And the anterior aspect of Torah must irradiate its hinder part; the contrast to this is the example of David, who described the Torah as “songs” (Ps. 119:54), for which reason he was punished (b*Sotah*, 35a), since there is a dimension to Torah loftier than its similarity to “songs.” It is this more profound element that must influence the way it is studied even at the basic level.

Torah study requires preliminary efforts, expressed by the concept of “blessing over the Torah beforehand” (b*Nedarim*, 81a). This may be defined as achieving an awareness of the unity of G-d, which can be appreciated on two levels: inferior unity (*yihuda tata'ah*), where one retains a sense of self, and superior unity (*yihuda 'ila'ah*), where one’s selfhood dissolves in the divine, utter *biṭṭul*. Even one who ordinarily experiences the inferior unity must, on occasion, attain the superior unity, consciousness of which is itself a consequence of the study of the internality of the Torah. It is this periodic advancement to a higher state of awareness that is the sustaining force for the routine service at the level of inferior unity.³⁹⁷

The principle of unbounded achievement through self-diminution underlies the entire notion of bringing the *shekhinah* back down to the nether realms, which is the central point of the discourse associated with Rayyats’s *hillula* (i.e. *Bosi legani* – 5710 (1950)). In kabbalistic/Ḥabadic terms this is described as the revelation of the “internality of '*atiqa qadisha* (the holy ancient one)’” in the future epoch, which is achieved through the acts and efforts of Israel during the exilic period, via the power of the internality of Torah.

Perhaps even more so than the discourse of 5717 (1957), this discourse makes copious and sophisticated use of Kabbalistic constructs and concepts. In the course of amplifying the words of Rayyats and citing from the generations of Ḥabad leaders, there are ethical directives toward correct Hasidic conduct, such as Torah study with proper attitude, the necessity of studying the “interiority of Torah,” and avoiding the pursuit of material excess. Yet again, there is also a metamessage, in addition to those identified in the earlier discourses. In the 5737 (1977) discourse the Rebbe is explicit about the portent of the very delivery of his discourse: It is the revelation of '*atiqa qadisha*, a glimmer of the revelation of eschaton. Furthermore, this is identical with the central point of the *hemshekh Bosi legani*, and therefore with all it embodies.

³⁹⁵ Based on teachings by R. Dov Ber and *Tsemakh Tsedek*.

³⁹⁶ Drawing on teachings by Maharash.

³⁹⁷ Based on a teaching by Rashab.

Having elucidated certain key Habad terms and having summarized the discourses under discussion (for a full presentation of these discourses, see appendices), we can now examine select passages from them to observe the midrashic intertextual practices they exhibit, effacing the boundaries between the various texts, and between the realms within them and within their contexts.

R. Yosef Yitskhok, 5710 (1950)

In the beginning of Chapter Seven of his *Bosi legani*, Rayyats elaborates on the significance of the Hebrew letter *yod*, ostensibly continuing his discussion begun in the prior chapter. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Habad thought (in the wake of the kabbalists and based on conceptions promulgated in *Sefer yetsirah*) reads great meaning into the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. They are understood to possess creative power, constituting the coding that creates all reality. Each letter's characteristics, such as its name and meaning, its shape, its numerical value (*gimatriya*), etc. are significant for appreciating the power of that letter. In the sixth chapter Rayyats had established that the differentiating characteristic of the two very similar letters, *dalet* (ד) and *resh* (ר), was that the *dalet* possesses an additional protrusion at its rear (i.e. top right), in contrast to the letter *resh*. This appendage Rayyats describes as a "letter *yod* (י)." The *yod* is point-like, signifying the abnegation of self, *biṭṭul*, that a recipient must undergo in order to make space for the bounty being bestowed upon them by their benefactor. Thus the *dalet* represents a true *meqabel*, recipient; "the true *meqabel* is in a state of utter *biṭṭul*."³⁹⁸ Chapter Seven apparently continues the theme with an analysis of the significance of the letter *yod*, which in turn should demonstrate how it endows the *dalet* with the capacity for reception. (I say "apparently" because, as will soon be noted below, the Rebbe reads an entirely new theme into the seventh chapter.)

In the course of this analysis, Rayyats proffers six additional insights regarding the letter *yod*. First, it is located specifically at the posterior of the *dalet*. (This is in contradistinction to the letter *hê* (ה), discussed in the eighth chapter, where the *yod* is within the letter itself.³⁹⁹) Second, it is the smallest of all letters. Third, it is the beginning of every letter. Fourth, by it the world-to-come was created. Fifth, it is *kol*, the element of "all" that "unites heaven and earth." Sixth, it (*yod/kol*) corresponds with the ninth Sephirah of *yesod* (foundation), which conveys influence to *malkhut* (sovereignty). (The identification of "kol" and the Sephirah of *yesod* was referred to earlier in this chapter. The verse at Chron. 29:11 is understood by the Kabbalists to refer to the seven nether Sephirot (*hessed* through *malkhut*), with the phrase 'for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth [belongs to you]' alluding to the penultimate Sephirah of *yesod*.)

³⁹⁸ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:15(Arabic numerals).

³⁹⁹ In Ch. VIII, the *yod* (within the *hê*) represents the consummate reception of the bestowal of the benefactor, and its actualization by the recipient. Within the *dalet*, the *yod* represents merely the recipient's readiness to receive (Ch. VI), the benefactor's readiness to bestow, as well as the presence of the bridge by which such bestowal can be transmitted (Ch. VII). See 5737, III (addendum). It is possible that the above-mentioned two stages (*yod* at the rear of the *dalet* and *yod* within the *hê*) contribute to the warrant within Rayyats for the Rebbe's discussion of the interplay of *panim* and *aḥor* (expanded on below) as well.

With this in mind, we will do a careful reading of a passage in Rayyats, and observe how the Rebbe treats it in each of his discourses on this chapter.⁴⁰⁰

Text of 5710

Now the letter *yod* which is on the letter *dalet*, through which the design of the *dalet* is differentiated from the design of the *resh*, is specifically on its hind part. The *yod*, although the smallest of all the letters, is the beginning of all the letters; for each letter begins with the letter *yod*. This is the [notion] that “By the *yod* was the world-to-come created” (b*Menaḥot*, 29b). Regarding this it says, ‘For all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth’ (I Chronicles, 29:11), which the Targum translates as “which unites heaven and earth.” This is the Sefirah of *yesod* (Foundation), from which *malkhut* (Sovereignty) receives.⁴⁰¹

In the proceeding exposition in this chapter, Rayyats focuses on the import of the presence or absence of *kol*, offering an expanded definition of the pivotal distinction between the letters *dalet* (containing *kol*) and *resh* (lacking *kol*). Thus the salient insights in this initial passage of the chapter would seem to be the relation of the *yod* to the term “*kol*” and its equation with the Sefirah of *yesod*. The first four insights would seem to be extraneous to the chapter’s topic. Additionally, at first glance, the entire chapter might seem to be a repetition of the previous chapter’s thesis, albeit substituting the notion of *kol* as the significance of the smidgen at the rear of the *dalet* for the notion of self-diminishment discussed in Chapter Six. The resolution to these problematilities emerges from the Rebbe’s discussions in his discourses, portions of which we will read anon.

We can summarize the interventions the Rebbe makes into Rayyats’s discussion as the following four observations: 1) The distinction between the subject of the sixth and seventh chapters of *Bosi legani* is that while Chapter VI discourses on the self-abnegation of the recipient (*meqabel*), Chapter VII expounds the self-abnegation of the bestower (*mashpi’a*). 2) Both categories of *biṭṭul* are characterized by the phrase “her self was diminished (*az’irat garmah*).” 3) A related phrase cited by Rayyats, “she has nothing of her own at all (*let lah mi-garmah klum*),” represents a greater abnegation than that expressed by the term *az’irat garmah*, denoting absolute vacation of self rather than simply diminution (the context from which these phrases are drawn and their connotations will be elaborated on following my presentation of the texts). 4) Concomitantly, the state of having nothing of one’s own provides the ideal conditions for prolific creativity, for “having all.” Some of these concepts will be articulated in the passages presented below, while I will unpack the others in my comments further on.

R. Menachem Mendel, 5717 (1957)

In the section we are about to read, the Rebbe does a careful reading of his own of his predecessor’s words, and in the process clarifies some of the problems noted above, thereby

⁴⁰⁰ See the full chapter with my commentary in addendum.

⁴⁰¹ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:16 (Arabic numerals); addendum, 5710.

offering a richer perspective on what Rayyats had actually put forth in his discourse. I will intersperse explanatory passages as we peruse, before offering my broader commentary further on.⁴⁰² We will also observe the Rebbe's direct citation of the founders of Hasidism and of the Habad "golden chain" as an integral part of his commentary on Rayyats.

Text of 5717

[My father-in-law] continues, in the discourse in the new section: The *yod* of the letter *dalet* which is at its rear, although it is the smallest letter of all the letters (the notion of *biṭṭul*, "her self was diminished," as above), it is the beginning of all letters. Each letter begins with a letter *yod*. This is the [idea expressed in the saying] "By the *yod* was the world-to-come created."

The overall explanation of this: Previously in the discourse the concept of the *yod* was explained. [It represents] "her self was diminished," the self-abnegation of the recipient and the student, through which they become a receptacle for the bestowals and *hamshakhot* from above. Here he explains further an even loftier concept [represented] in the *yod*: as it is from the perspective of the benefactor. This means that the manner in which the influence is drawn down from the master so that they be able to bestow it below to the recipient is also alluded to by the letter *yod*.⁴⁰³

In the sixth chapter Rayyats had framed the significance of the *yod* as the self-abnegation of the recipient, e.g. the student, that is the necessary orientation to be capable of receiving that which the giver, e.g. the master, wishes to transmit. The additional teachings about this letter in this chapter, per the Rebbe, introduce a new aspect to the *yod* that was not addressed earlier: namely that the *yod* as it is discussed here is a facet of the benefactor, not of the recipient. It does not represent the submission on the part of the disciple to hear the words of the teacher, but the teacher's preparation to transmit by constricting the information in a way that the disciple will be able to absorb it. Thus there is no repetition here, since Chapter Seven initiates a new teaching, and it is necessary to consider the various insights relating to the *yod* in light of the understanding that it represents a facet of the giver (*mashpi'a*).

The Rebbe derives this insight from Rayyats's teaching that every letter begins with a *yod*.

This is the [significance of] the *yod* being the beginning of all letters. To wit: all *hamshakhot* and bestowals below come about via letters. 'Ot (letter) is of the etymology of "'ata boqer (the morning has arrived)" (Isaiah, 21:12), which indicates overall drawing down and bestowal below. This begins with the point that is the *yod* (the beginning of all letters).⁴⁰⁴

Letter ('ot) implies *hamshakhah*, channeling down. The Rebbe links the (Rabbinic) Hebrew word for letter, 'ot, etymologically with the word 'ata (arrived) found in Isaiah (as it is in Deuteronomy, 33:2). He thus infers that a letter represents a means of conveyance, a channel

⁴⁰² The following selection is Ch II of 5717 (addendum).

⁴⁰³ Schneerson, *ibid*, 1:232.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

by which its meaning, read: force, may be drawn down. In this way, the fact that each character of the Hebrew alphabet starts with a point, identified with the letter *yod*, is taken to signify that every *hamshakhah* begins with *yod*. *Hamshakhah* is the act of the benefactor, not the recipient, and therefore we are discussing a different connotation of *yod* than previously.

The Rebbe continues:

[Rayyats] then goes on to explain regarding our topic: This is the notion of “By the *yod* was the world-to-come created.”⁴⁰⁵

Rayyats’s fourth insight mentioned above (drawing on a Talmudic statement) that the world-to-come was created by the *yod* likewise imputes creative power to that letter. The *yod* is depicted in this teaching as being the capacity by which a “world” is brought into existence. This teaching resonates with the view of the power of the letters taught in *Sefer yetsirah* and its redounding in the “Habad theory of letters” laid out above.⁴⁰⁶ The letter *yod*, which had earlier been explained by Rayyats to represent the self-abnegation of the receiver (*meqabel*), is now located in the realm of the giver (*mashpi’a*), possessing the capacity to bestow existence and life, a position which is presumed to be at the opposite pole of self-effacing receptivity. The Rebbe expands on this insight:

The idea here is: The overall concept of the *yod*, “her self was diminished,” which is the notion of absolute *biṭṭul*, as it is present in the benefactor is the notion of self-constriction (*tsimtsum*) to the point of total removal. Specifically through this, is it possible to attain bestowal and *hamshakhah* below.⁴⁰⁷

In other words, giving, such as in the process of teaching, requires self-diminishment on the part of the benefactor. Not only must the student efface their ego to be able to hear what the teacher is transmitting, but the teacher must likewise remove their “self” from the equation, focusing instead on the needs of the student. Only by “forgetting” their own perception of the topic can they discover the means of articulating it in terms that the student will understand.

In the terms of *Bosi legani*: in Chapter Six Rayyats had described the *yod*’s property of self-abnegation by recourse to a Zoharic locution in reference to the moon, “her self was diminished.” The moon, which is correlated with the realm of the feminine, is classified as recipient. The Rebbe, in discovering that Rayyats assigns a function for the *yod* in the realm of the giver, does not understand its significance to have fundamentally changed; it remains a symbol of self-diminishment. However, such an orientation would seem to be at odds with the giver’s role to bestow and exhibit expansive magnanimity. The Rebbe resolves this apparent contradiction by positing that “bestowal” is only possible when there is a preceding “constriction.” This notion is elucidated by reference to teachings outside *Bosi legani*, namely to ideas attributed to the Besht and to the Maggid of Mezeritch:

This accords with the interpretation of the Ba’al Shem Tov on the verse ‘And *Elokim* said “let there be light”’ (Genesis, 1:3) (for it is seemingly problematic: what relation does the divine name *Elokim* have to light, whose function is light and revelation, i.e. *hamshakhah* and bestowal?): “And *Hashem yitbarakh* (“the Name, may He be blessed”) said, by the

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Weiss, *Sefer Yesirah*, 32 ff., differentiates between the Talmudic perception and that of *Sefer yetsirah*.

⁴⁰⁷ Scheerson, *ibid*, 232-33.

force of the attribute of *Elokim*, which is the attribute of Severity that constricts the light, because of this there will be a sustainable light which the world can tolerate” (*Keter shem tov*, sec. 247).⁴⁰⁸

According to the Besht, light is produced in the story of creation by the statement of “*Elokim*,” severity and constriction.⁴⁰⁹ Only in this way would the light be sustainable, i.e. beneficial for the world. This notion suggests that constriction (*yod*) is sine qua non for bestowal; thus we can account for the bestower possessing a *yod* aspect, as the benefactor must constrict their influence in order to bestow.

The Maggid’s iteration of this concept rests on the principle adduced by the Rabbis that any Biblical use of the word *wa-yehi* (“and there was”) should be understood as intimating that *way yehi* (“woe there becomes”), implying suffering. As the Rebbe cites him:

The Maggid explains further regarding the verse’s conclusion, ‘And there was (*wa-yehi*) light’: “Our Sages say, “Wherever it states *wa-yehi*, it is an expression of anguish” (b*Megillah*, 10b). Thus it says ‘*wa-yehi* ’or (and there was light),’ meaning, by the force of *tsimtsum*, which appears as pain for the world etc., on the contrary, from this does the true light and the sustainment of the world come about.” As “it says, ‘And it was evening, and it was morning etc.’ for from the evening, i.e. the *tsimtsum*, was the morning created and brought into being” (*Or torah*, end sec. 2).⁴¹⁰

The Maggid’s teaching thus also rests on the truism that *tsimtsum* is necessary in for light to radiate forth; perhaps his unique contribution lies in the suggestion of loss or pain that is inherent in *tsimtsum*. The bestower not only practices self-restraint in order to give, but actual self-renunciation, so that their light will illumine and be beneficial.

The Rebbe comments on the Maggid’s thought that “light” results specifically from “anguish,” noting both that which is lost and that which is gained through the bestower’s *tsimtsum*:

This means that this was not the original light, where “the infinite light filled the area of the void,” and there was no possibility for any existence at all, but a light that came through a *tsimtsum* process. This is the notion of “*wa-yehi* light,” *wa-yehi* [read: *way yehi*, woe there becomes] an expression of anguish, indicating the *tsimtsum* through which the existence of the nether light came about.⁴¹¹

While the original light, in its intensity and perfection, is lost through the *tsimtsum* process, such constriction is necessary for the “nether” light to emerge into view.

In the following paragraph, an additional citation from the Maggid is adduced. This teaching introduces a further facet to *tsimtsum*, its being motivated by love:

⁴⁰⁸ Schneerson, *ibid*, 233. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov, *Keter shem tov – ha-shalem*, ed. Jacob Immanuel Schochet (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2004), 143.

⁴⁰⁹ See above, “Key Terms,” regarding the significance of this particular divine name, as well as the Lurianic theory of constriction (*simsum/tsimtsum*).

⁴¹⁰ Schneerson, *ibid*. Dov Ber, *Maggid devarav le-Ya’akov* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2004), 3 (second pagination).

⁴¹¹ Schneerson, *ibid*.

Elsewhere [the Maggid] further elucidates, that this is “analogous to a father (who) constricts his intellect and speaks childish words for the sake of his young son. Likewise, all manner of immature characteristics and actions are born within the father. For he loves these immature actions so that his son will be entertained etc.” Similarly in the analogue, the Holy One constricts Himself via *tsimtsum* for the sake of Israel. Thus our Sages say: “In the beginning (*be-reshit*) (*Elokim* created, the notion of *tsimtsum*) – for the sake of Israel, who were called “first (*reshit*).” For Israel are the children of the Holy One, as it is written, ‘You are sons unto the L-rd, your G-d’ (Deuteronomy, 14:1),” and it is for them that the Holy One constricts Himself. The Maggid concludes: “The *tsimtsum* is called *hokhmah* (wisdom), for *hokhmah* is the *’ayin* (naught), as in ‘and wisdom, from whence (*me-’ayin*) may it be found?’ (Job, 28:12).”⁴¹²

This latter teaching of the Maggid’s aligns more directly with *Bosi legani*, as it likewise draws an analogy of interaction between a human giver and recipient, similar to the analogy of master and disciple articulated by Rayyats. Its references to the love that impels the bestower’s self-constriction, as well as to the association of *tsimtsum* with the term “*’ayin*” and with the Sefirah of *hokhmah* serve to shed new light on Rayyats’s words as well, although the Rebbe does not draw out their implications here. In 5737 (1977), the Rebbe does spend time on the association of the *yod* with the first Sefirah of *hokhmah*, even as Rayyats explicitly associates it here with the ninth Sefirah, *yesod*. Here, the Rebbe concludes this passage by summarizing the insights arrived at through the citations from the Besht and the Maggid:

This is the notion of the point-like *yod* as it is present in the benefactor (which is analogous to the point-like *yod* of the recipient: *bittul* and self-diminishment through which they become a ready and prepared vessel to receive all the master and benefactor has to offer): in order for there to be a sustainable light, meaning that allowance is made for [another] existence, and that such existence should be able to receive the light, this can only occur via “*wa-yehi*, an expression of anguish,” the notion of *tsimtsum*, called *hokhmah*, which is the point-like *yod*.⁴¹³

Without *tsimtsum*, there could be no “sustainable” light, i.e. a light that can benefit and be appreciated by creation. The original light did not allow for any existence outside of itself to abide, since it “filled the area of the void,” as the Lurianic description has it. The process of self-diminishment that is *tsimtsum*, for all the loss that it entails, is what enables existence outside of the divine, and for that existence to be “enlightened” to the extent possible. This possibility is what is represented by the first Sefirah (in the schema adopted by Habad) of *hokhmah*, as it is, in the words of the Tanya, the “first inkling of the revelation of the light of the *’ên sof*” to the created realms.⁴¹⁴

Thus far the selection from the discourse of 5717 (1957). We have seen the Rebbe create a kind of careful study of the words of Rayyats, illuminating subtle nuances within them and developing these by drawing on other teachings in the Hasidic universe of discourse and thereby unfolding notions that would have gone entirely unnoticed otherwise. Let us now examine how

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Mindel, “Likkutei Amarim,” in Kehot Publication Society, *Tanya*, 272.

these texts relate to each other, and in what ways their tone is midrashic, effacing boundaries by bringing the wondrous closer.

Bringing the Wondrous Closer

The passage from Rayyats cited above makes explicit reference to three canonical sources: the Talmudic tractate *Menaḥot*, the biblical book of Chronicles, and a Targumic gloss on the verse quoted. In the Rebbe's comments of 5717 (1957) reproduced here, there are at least ten references to pre-Hasidic sources, five of these within his citations of the Besht and the Maggid, and two of these ("her self is diminished" and "the infinite light filled the area of the void") are not presented as citations. However, bearing in mind that the larger discussion of Rayyats's *Bosi legani* is *meyusad*, founded on, earlier discourses, and is further in conversation with many other Ḥabad discourses of his own as of his predecessors, the intertextual links triggered even in the few lines reproduced here are legion. A portion of these linkages are unpacked in R. Menachem Mendel's discourses on this chapter. These discourses in turn dialogue intertextually with a wealth of additional sources, and the initiate into Ḥabad teaching would recognize many of the phraseologies used or notions presented in the Rebbe's words as drawing on the Ḥabad intellectual legacy. But it is important to adequately appreciate the extent of the intertextual network that the Ḥabad corpus represents.

One inadequacy in Roth's methodology (referred to in previous chapters⁴¹⁵) even as it pertains to the analytical reading of a Ḥabad discourse, and where it certainly fails to allow us to hear as the Hasid hears it, is the lengths that he avers one's incorporation of additional materials must go in order to fundamentally apprehend the discourse being examined. He suggests that one must familiarize themselves with the extant discourses on the same *dibbur ha-mathil* (title verse); this is of limited usefulness in my opinion (as noted earlier), as one cannot assume that two discourses of the same title are necessarily about the same topic, even as it is worth finding out whether or not this is the case.⁴¹⁶ He also suggests that one must become acquainted with the Kabbalistic texts referred to in the discourse, or that serve as the sources for concepts invoked within it; this is undoubtedly beneficial in general terms.⁴¹⁷ Roth even bids the would-be scholar of Ḥabad texts to "strive to know the text as if they were its producer. Many times the thinkers of Ḥabad produced *divrey elokim hayyim*... such that if the Hasid was not familiar with the bases of the texts... it would be difficult for them to understand the sequence of the lectures..."⁴¹⁸ In a footnote, Roth comments that this is indicated by terms found in the discourses such as "as written elsewhere," and "as [a previous thinker] wrote in his *dibbur ha-mathil* [such-and-so]." "The implication is that the thinker, leader of Ḥabad, requires his Hasidim to have a profound familiarity with the thought of Ḥabad throughout the generations."⁴¹⁹ He is correct in this, but it seems to me that he envisions this in too narrow a scope, since he does not offer an adequate suggestion of how to achieve such familiarity. It is the case that any statement in a Ḥabad

⁴¹⁵ See references in Ch Background, "The Unfolding of the Habad Tradition," et passim; Ch Intertextuality, "Approaching the Text of a Ḥabad Discourse."

⁴¹⁶ Roth, *Ketsad liqro*, 189.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 176.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 180.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

discourse may well refer to any number of locations within the corpus of Ḥabad thought, such that one would require as encyclopedic a comprehension of the body of Ḥabad texts as is feasible. One may not rely on there being any distinct clue in the text to trigger this referent text. I will now illustrate this.

One intertext that is lurking in the background of both the passage from Rayyats and the Rebbe's response is that of Epistle XV of the section of *Tanya* called *Iggeret ha-qodesh* ("the holy epistle"). This epistle by R. Schneur Zalman sets as its objective to "'understand parable and idiom, the words of the wise and their riddles'⁴²⁰ regarding the Sephirot... to understand somewhat of His divinity from the soul that is garbed within the human flesh," meaning that he intends to use the human psyche as an analogy for the divine Sephirot. R. Schneur Zalman speaks of the process of an act of benevolence as it takes shape within the psyche, and at one point begins to depict this specifically in terms of a father who wishes to transmit an intellectual matter to his son.

Such as when one wishes to convey a matter of wisdom, to teach it to one's son, if one were to articulate it in its entirety as it is in their own mind, the son would not be able to understand or absorb it. Rather, one must organize it in another arrangement and manner, 'each word spoken fittingly,' little by little... so that the [intellectual matter] not be drawn down in its state as a very subtle thought within their mind and intellect, but should be somewhat modified from the subtlety of their mind, and a less subtle thought be created, such that the son be capable of absorbing it in his mind and comprehension...

The above description would be recognized in Rayyats description (as developed by R. Menachem Mendel) of the master's self-withdrawal in order to allow space for the disciple. It would also resonate with the teaching of the Maggid cited by the Rebbe of a father "constricting his intellect" for the sake of his son. R. Schneur Zalman continues:

The aspect of *yesod* is analogous to the bonding, where the father attaches his intellect to his son's when studying with him, with love and desire, desiring that the son understand. Otherwise, even if the son hears the same words from his father who is articulating them while studying to himself, [the son] could not understand as much as he will now, when his father binds his mind to his and speaks to him face to face, with love and desire, desiring greatly that his son understand. The greater the desire and pleasure, all the more is conveyed and taught. The son may absorb more, and the father will bestow more, for by means of desire and pleasure, one's mind increases and expands with broad knowledge to be conveyed to one's son.

Here the analogy of teacher/father as embodiment of *yesod* is made explicitly, paralleling both the father in the Maggid's parable, and the teacher in Rayyats's. These analogies do not ignore the noticeably sexual connotation of *yesod*, as R. Schneur Zalman concludes parenthetically:

This is analogous to the actual bodily level, where increased desire and pleasure produces abundant semen... wherefore the [Kabbalists] used the analogy of bodily coupling...

While the Maggid's parable does not explicitly reference *yesod* (in fact, it references a different Sephirah, *ḥokhmah*), arguably and in part on the basis of the above passage from *Tanya* the Rebbe can connect it with Rayyats's teaching about the role of the benefactor (*mashpi'a*).

⁴²⁰ See Proverbs, 1:6.

Nevertheless, there is no explicit reference nor obvious allusion to this passage in *Tanya*. It is only the Hasidic auditor's familiarity with this passage and their perception of its resonances with the Rebbe's presentation of Rayyats's thought that enables their appreciation of the latter to be enriched by the former. (The subtleties of the correct understandings, on the analytical level, of the notions of the letter *yod*, such that its association with the Sefirah of *hokhmah* does not conflict with its identification with the Sefirah of *yesod*, is something the Rebbe reconciles and elaborates on in 5737 (1977),⁴²¹ as mentioned above.) But there is another layer to what the Hasid is hearing in these teachings.

The analogy being employed here to "understand the parable and idiom" of the descriptions of the divine realm is not merely from the human experience, but is something the Hasid is experiencing at the very moment of the *maymer*. Rayyats in his discourse conveys to his hearers that he, the rebbe, is transmitting divine influence to them, and that for them, the disciples, to be able to properly absorb it, they must adopt the posture of the *dalet* with its *yod* of self-diminishment at its rear, by emptying themselves of any personal thoughts, and to focus entirely upon what the rebbe is saying.⁴²² "At the time [of the master's transmission] the [disciple] must simply absorb the master's words, and only later consider them so as to grasp the matter."⁴²³

The Rebbe likewise contributes to the force of the moment of the *maymer*: he describes the internal process within the rebbe at the time of its delivery, wherein he is focused on restraining the stream of his own inaccessible intellectual perceptions in favor of a constricted, circumscribed thought, a "point," that can be absorbed by the Hasidim. By invoking the Maggid's parable he signals moreover that this moment is characterized by love, and that by listening to the discourse the Hasid is receiving the rebbe's love. In this way, the esoterica being expounded in fine detail in the discourse is translated into terms of experience, and their reality is made tangible. This is one strategy by which the treatment of intertexts in the discourse is sounded in a key that elides any stark distinction between "up there" and "down here." An analysis of a passage in the Rebbe's discourse of 5737 (1977) will allow us to appreciate this weaving together of realms in the process of expounding *khasides* with even richer texturing.

R. Menachem Mendel, 5737 (1977)

In the previous selection we saw the Rebbe read and gloss a passage of Rayyats's discourse, in the course of which some of the anomalies we noted about that passage were resolved. In the following selection the Rebbe seeks a more thoroughgoing accounting for the ideas being propounded by his father-in-law. While in the 5717 (1957) discourse the Rebbe endeavored to explain what Rayyats was saying, in 5737 (1977) he queries on what basis does he say it? To use the terms of Adler and Van Doren, he moves from an analytical reading to a synoptic one.⁴²⁴ Here too, as we will demonstrate, the objective is not only to achieve a more

⁴²¹ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 247.

⁴²² See Roth, *ibid*, 178, esp. his quote from Rayyats about the study of *khasides*.

⁴²³ Schneerson, *ibid*, 1:15 (Arabic numerals).

⁴²⁴ Adler and Van Doren, *How to Read*, 20; *ibid*, 59 ff, and 309 ff.

precise and profound analytical appreciation of Rayyats's *Bosi legani*, but a deeper experience of the discourse, a fundamental "bringing closer" of the universe of the *maymer*.

A word about the format of the text we are looking at: 10 Shevat, 1977, occurred on the Sabbath.⁴²⁵ There was a *farbrengen* on the afternoon of the Sabbath, during which the Rebbe delivered the discourse *Bosi legani* as he did annually, in the usual format. On Saturday night the Rebbe held a second *farbrengen*, one that was more widely attended and that could be broadcast to other locations as well, which the Sabbath regulations had prevented. He then repeated the discourse of that afternoon, but with certain modifications. These discourses were among the few that were published as *mugah*, authorized as edited by the Rebbe, prior to 1986. When the *manikhim* (transcribers) wondered which of the discourses to prepare for editing (*hagahah*) or how to blend them, the Rebbe suggested they use the more publicized Saturday night *maymer* as the basic text of the transcript, and to incorporate passages that had only been recited on the Sabbath afternoon below a horizontal line in the middle of the page, referenced within the text by Hebrew letters. (This was a unique method of laying out this kind of double discourse in print, and was not duplicated on subsequent similar occasions.) I have set these interpolated passages apart in my translation by highlighting the first letter of each paragraph in bold type, and by formatting them as hanging paragraphs. At some points such an interpolation breaks up a sentence, and I have left it that way.

Rayyats in his discourse had expounded that "the letter *yod* which is on the letter *dalet*... the Sefirah of *yesod* (Foundation), from which *malkhut* (Sovereignty) receives... through the Sefirah of *yesod*, *hessed* (Benevolence) and *gevurah* (Severity) are unified with *malkhut*... The letter *resh* lacks the... unifying Sefirah of *yesod*." The implication is that the Sefirah of *malkhut*, represented by the letter *dalet*, is imbued with the influence from the powerful divine attributes above it through the channel of the Sefirah of *yesod*, and that this influence is encapsulated within the point-like *yod* at the *dalet*'s rear, the feature absent from the letter *resh*. This depiction of the *yod* as representing a wealth of divine bounty would seem to be at odds with the previous chapter's interpretation of the *yod* as representing self-diminishment and abnegation. In our treatment of a passage from the discourse of 5717 (1957), we discussed how the Rebbe identified two or three different allusions within the *yod*, indicating the self-diminishment of the recipient as well as of the bestower etc. In the discourse of 5737 (1977) he takes a somewhat different tack, elucidating how the two notions of abnegation and of bounty embodied in the *yod* are not only not in conflict with each other, but in fact complement one another.⁴²⁶

Text of 5737

Now, the reason that it is imperative that the *yod* (of the Sefirah of *yesod* etc.) be drawn down into the *dalet* (of the Sefirah of *malkhut*), despite what was explained above that there must be absolute self-abnegation ("her self was diminished," and "she has nothing

⁴²⁵ See "Hagahot al ma'amar dibbur ha-mathil bati le-ganni 5737," *Talmidei Bet Ha-midrash Oholei Torah* (2017), accessed May 8, 2021, <http://teshura.com/Hagahos%20Basi%20Ligany%205737.pdf> for the history of this discourse's editing. See also Levi Yitshaq Epstein, "Ha-sippur me-ahore hagahat ma'amar 'Bati le-ganni' 5737," *Shturem.net*, accessed May 9, 2021, <http://www.shturem.net/index.php?section=news&id=93830>.

⁴²⁶ The following is from Ch IV of 5737 (addendum).

of her own at all”), is because the notion of *biṭṭul* (on its own, is not the desired end; rather it) is a precursor to the disclosure⁴²⁷

As noted, I have tried to preserve the format of this discourse as it was edited and authorized as per the Rebbe’s instructions, which at times entails breaking off in mid-sentence. The preceding quotation concludes after several inserted paragraphs which represent aspects expounded at the Sabbath *farbrengen* that were omitted or summarized on Saturday night.

The overarching thesis the Rebbe propounds here is that *biṭṭul*, self-diminishment and self-abnegation, is merely a first (necessary) step in a process of prolific productivity. The Rebbe supports this assertion in seven ways in the passage we are examining here. The first is by noting the significance of the presence of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet*, as contrasted with the *resh* that lacks this characteristic. Since, as the Rebbe has made the case in the preceding chapter, the *yod* encapsulates the transmission of extraordinary divine powers to the *dalet* (read: *malkhut*), even as Rayyats had insisted in Chapter Six of his discourse that it symbolizes self-abnegation, an obvious resolution of these two concepts is that they are not contradictory, but rather complimentary. That this is the case is evident from a careful consideration of Rayyats’s words further along in Chapter Seven, as the Rebbe elaborates:

Meaning: It is not the case that, from the perspective of *biṭṭul* in the realm of the holy, there is no thing or existence at all. On the contrary: in the realm of the holy there is everything (*s’iz do alts*). Rather, the notion of *biṭṭul* is [understood in the context of] the precise phraseology “(the moon) has nothing of her own at all.” It is not said in this context that her abnegation is such that “she has nothing at all” period (without the word *le-garmah* (“of her own”). Rather, “she has nothing of her own at all,” in and of herself. However, on account of (and via) her [stance of] *biṭṭul* toward the *yod*, [i.e.] the Sefirah of *yesod*, she has everything.⁴²⁸

In a moment the Rebbe will go on to elaborate on this statement that *biṭṭul*, the defining characteristic of the “realm of the holy (*qedushah*),” entails the coinciding reality that “there is everything,” as it emerges from the discussion of Rayyats. In the preceding quotation he supports this idea by noting a *diyug*, a nuance of the phraseology, in the Zoharic turn of phrase “the moon has nothing of her own at all,” the emphasis being placed on the word(s) “of her own.” This phrase, used widely in Habad thought (including in Chapter Six of Rayyats’s discourse) to denote the ultimate extremity of *biṭṭul* as exemplified by the tenth Sefirah of *malkhut* symbolized as it is by the moon, connotes positive capacity even as it expresses utter abnegation; there is “nothing – of her own,” while there is “much” that she is capable of precisely because of her emptiness. The Rebbe now teases this notion out of Rayyats’s words:

This also explains the sequence of the discourse: After explaining that the realm of the holy is [characterized by] *biṭṭul*, [my father-in-law] clarifies that this is not to say that it has nothing; rather, on the contrary, in this way it has all (since the *dalet* of *malkhut* contains the *yod* of the Sefirah of *yesod*). Thus he continues the discourse (there) with an explication of the statement of the Master of the Academy that “one that is minor, he is great; and one that is great, he is minor” (Zohar I, 122b). On account of the [characteristic of] *biṭṭul* in the holy realm (“he

⁴²⁷ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:248.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

is minor”), there is greater disclosure and effluence than the magnitude (“he is great”) that [characterizes] the opposite side.⁴²⁹

The preceding passage contributes an additional two proof-texts to support the Rebbe’s thesis of fecundity through self-abnegation; Rayyats’s teaching that through *biṭṭul* one has “all,” and the Zoharic passage cited by Rayyats to the effect that “one who is minor, is great.” The sequence of topics discussed by Rayyats in chapters Six and Seven intimate what the Rebbe is suggesting, establishing (in Chapter Six) that “the realm of the holy is [characterized by] *biṭṭul*,” and following this up (in Chapter Seven) by establishing that the presence of *kol* (“all”) is exclusive to the holy side. The passage from Zohar explicitly correlates diminishment (being “minor”) with greatness, in turn illuminating Rayyats’s intention in his own presentation of the topics.

A couple of details are worthy of note here. First, when studying a discourse of Rayyats such as *Bosi legani*, one is confronted by a rhetorical style that reiterates themes in a number of ways, and it is not always clear what additional insight is being contributed by the various reiterations. In his discussion of the significance of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet*, for instance, the expositions extend over two chapters, citing and referring to a number of canonical sources, and a reader could be forgiven for failing to grasp all the nuances of his presentation. In particular, one might easily miss the fact that Rayyats essentially proffers two distinct insights into the meaning of the *yod*, one in Chapter Six (*yod* as self-abnegation) and the other in Chapter Seven (*yod* as “all”). The Rebbe’s elaborations in his discourse provide a model for reading Rayyats, exemplifying how to identify the thread of the latter’s thought process and how to contextualize the plethora of details that he lays out in his discourse. Here the Rebbe has not only underscored the shift that has occurred between the topic of Chapter Six and that of Chapter Seven, but has also accentuated the contours of a third concept that comes into focus through the juxtaposition of the two chapters.

As such, a second noteworthy observation is that this last move is made only in the 5737 (1977) discourse, but not in the earlier one of 5717 (1957), where the Rebbe only commented on the shift in topic in the seventh chapter. In the first discourse the Rebbe spoke of the “*yod* of the *meqabel* (recipient)” (Chapter Six), and the “*yod* of the *mashpi’a* (bestower)” (Chapter Seven), but did not activate the possible reading of “the sequence of the discourse (*hemshekh ha-ma’amar*).” By activating this potential in the second discourse, the Rebbe uncovered an additional quality in the recipient; they are not only capable of utter self-abnegation, but are moreover poised to produce prolifically through their interaction with the *mashpi’a*.

The following passage is the third part of the Rebbe’s elaboration on the notion of *biṭṭul* as a “precursor for the disclosure [that follows it],” where he presents the fourth and fifth proof-texts for this concept: the notion that *biṭṭul* as enacted in one’s personal divine service is joined with a stance of “broadness,” and the liturgical phrase implying that when one is “as dust to all” one’s heart can be “opened in your Torah.”

It is likewise with regard to divine service. It is known that the intended [implication] of the notion of *biṭṭul* is not, G-d forbid, the state of a “trampled threshold.” On the contrary, divine service must be practiced with expansiveness, as it is written, ‘And I shall walk in wide ways’ (Psalms, 119:45). One’s conduct with regard to holy matters, [i.e.] Torah study, observance of the commandments, etc., must be

⁴²⁹ Ibid, 248-49.

in a lofty manner etc. *Biṭṭul* is necessary as a prerequisite, so that through the [attitude of] *biṭṭul* that “my soul be like dust to all,” there can be the “open[ing] of my heart to Your Torah,” similar to the above [concept] that through *biṭṭul*, one has all.⁴³⁰

The “trampled threshold (*asquppa ha-nidreset*)” is an idiom (used in Modern Hebrew as well) for someone who is a pushover, or a “doormat,” one exhibiting absolute passivity. The Rebbe distinguishes between such a stance and that of the ideal of *biṭṭul* which Ḥabad thought sets for the Hasid, which must not remain an end in itself, but must condition one to be able to act expansively, with conviction and assuredness. He likewise points to the liturgical phrase found at the end of the prayer of Eighteen Benedictions (*Shemoneh esreh*) recited thrice daily, “To those that curse me, let my soul be silent; let my soul be like dust to all. Open my heart in Your Torah, and Your commandments let my soul pursue...” The suggestion is that the first clause expressing the aspiration of being “like dust,” i.e. lowly and submissive, is a precondition to the second clause, the service to the divine through Torah study and observance of the commandments, in which the worshipper takes a proactive and assertive role.

Having developed in an interpolated comment the idea that *biṭṭul* is but a precursor to disclosure, referencing five canonical texts that bear out this notion, the 5737 (1977) discourse now returns to the conclusion of the sentence in its main text,

[The notion of *biṭṭul* ... is a precursor to the disclosure] that follows it.⁴³¹

Once again, a passage (from the Sabbath discourse) is interpolated:

Now, since the [quintessential] point of this *hemshekh* (of *Bosi legani*) is that the ultimate [divine] intention [in creation] is that “he, may he be blessed, might have a dwelling in the nether realms,”⁴³² so that this intention concerns the entire evolutionary system of the worlds (*seder ha-hishtalshelut*), it is understood that the concept that the purpose of the *biṭṭul* (of the letter *dalet*) is to enable the disclosure (of the letter *yod*) (which is elaborated on in this section), is valid for the entirety of the evolutionary system of the worlds (as will be explained below regarding worlds, souls, Torah etc.).⁴³³

This interpolation really serves as an anticipation of what the Rebbe intends to work out in the remainder of the discourse, namely the interplay of binaries, broadly termed as “anterior and posterior (*panim we-ahor*),” in a number of different contexts. The warrant for this discussion is the idea that the series of *Bosi legani* discourses go to the heart of the divine purpose for creation, and therefore topics discussed in it are refracted within every aspect of reality, the entirety of *hishtalshelut*, the hierarchy of gradations of divine light by which all comes into being. It is, however, noteworthy that the Rebbe succinctly summarizes the gist of the entire *hemshekh* here, which is an unusual and illuminating moment.⁴³⁴

One pillar of the structure of the Rebbe’s hermeneutical approach in general is to identify the fundamental guiding principle of a given work or author, and then to raise and resolve

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 249.

⁴³¹ Ibid, 248.

⁴³² See Ch. Language, “Dirah be-tahtonim Midrash,” for a discussion of this idea.

⁴³³ Schneerson, *ibid*, 249.

⁴³⁴ See also sec. XIV of 5737 (1977), *ibid*, 260.

particular difficulties within the text in light of this principle. In the Rebbe's well-known *Rashi sikhes* (talks on Rashi), the Rebbe analyzes countless comments by Rashi in light of his statement "I have come only to expound the straightforward meaning of Scripture (*peshuto shel miqra*).” Any detail in Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch must therefore contribute to one's understanding of this straightforward sense.⁴³⁵ The Torah in general, to the full connotative extent of that word, is beholden to the notion that "Torah derives from the etymology of instruction (*torah leshon hora'ah*)"; any statement that could be construed as "Torah" must therefore have some relevant instruction for the contemporary individual.⁴³⁶ Maimonides' legal work *Mishneh torah*, characterized in his preface as consisting of "discrete laws (*halakhot halakhot*)," conveys some legal teaching with every line; the mishnaic tractate *Avot*, a work of "matters of piety (*mille de-ḥassiduta*)" (see *bBava Qama*, 30a), focuses solely on the extra-legal; and the foundational Ḥabad treatise *Tanya* unwaveringly indicates how divine service is accessible to all (*ki qarov elekha*), as asserted on its title page.⁴³⁷ Here the Rebbe provides just such a summation of *Bosi legani*, and indicates how this will inform his continued discussion of this chapter. (Whether the theme of a "dwelling in the nether realms" undergirds the Rebbe's interpretations in other *Bosi legani* discourses is a subject that requires further study.⁴³⁸)

Now the Rebbe continues in the main text of this portion, where he cites teachings of the first three forefathers of Ḥabad, the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezeritch, and R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, which serve to support the Rebbe's insight that *biṭṭul*'s function is to enable disclosure. These represent proof-texts numbers six and seven to establish this thesis of the Rebbe's. R. Schneur Zalman's teaching is drawn from Ch. 49 of *Tanya*, where he considers the Lurianic notion of *tsimtsum* from the vantage point of the psychology of both the divine and the inner human.

This notion (that the purpose of *biṭṭul* is to enable disclosure) may be understood with the preface of the Alter Rebbe's exposition in *Tanya*, ch. 49, [on the idea] that the *biṭṭul* required of every Jew must be "as water reflects the face to the face" (Prov., 27:19). "Just as the Holy One, blessed be he, as it were, set and removed to one side, to use an analogy, his great, unending light etc. and he set aside all of the holy supernal hosts, causing his presence (*shekhinah*) to dwell upon us etc. 'you have chosen us from every nation and language etc. you have drawn us near etc.' When one considers etc. then automatically, as water reflects face to face, his soul will blaze etc. [being moved] to set aside and abandon all one has etc."⁴³⁹

Tsimtsum, per R. Schneur Zalman, is an act of divine love so that G-d and humanity may meet, and as such, "as water reflects the face to the face," it should call forth a reciprocal renunciation of self on the part of the individual. It follows, therefore, that the desired end which the *Alter*

⁴³⁵ In Toviya Bloi, *Kelale Rashi (be-Ferusho 'al ha-Torah)* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1980), the author provides a comprehensive compilation of R. Menachem Mendel's hermeneutic principles for interpreting Rashi.

⁴³⁶ See, e.g., Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, 33:24, and references.

⁴³⁷ See Schneerson, *ibid*, 26:117, re: Maimonides; *ibid*, 17:347, et passim, re: *Avot*; *ibid*, 21:429, re: *Tanya*.

⁴³⁸ Some possible hermeneutics for *Bosi le-ganni*: Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 2:460, "point of *hemshekh*, human service to the divine"; *ibid*, 2:545, where the point of the *hemshekh* is understood in the context of victory in battle; *ibid*, 2:654, that the innermost point of the *hemshekh* is the purpose of one's living on earth; not precisely the same theme as averred here.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, 1:248-49.

rebbe envisions as a result of this self-renouncement can likewise be assumed about the cosmic divine constriction which it reflects. As R. Schneur Zalman adduces this meditation to enable the worshipper to fulfill their religious duties with a sense of love for the divine, by the same token the divine *tsimtsum* must be understood as a precursor to the perfected world that results from ideal worship.

During the Sabbath discourse the Rebbe added that the original *tsimtsum* was characterized by “utter removal,” and that likewise the inner *tsimtsum* of the worshipper must be similarly absolute (this passage is omitted here in the interest of continuity). It would seem that the Rebbe wishes to emphasize that, while he is going to argue that the ideal is not loss of self but rather astonishing growth, this should not be understood as minimizing the extent of the initial state of *biṭṭul*. This *biṭṭul* must be total; yet, through this, the later achievements will be made possible to the fullest degree. The Rebbe now goes on to complete his argument:

Now, since the *biṭṭul* is like water reflecting face to face, it follows that, just as for the person, once the above-mentioned contemplation effects *biṭṭul* [in a manner of] “setting aside and abandoning all one has,” the end of this *biṭṭul* is to make [G-d] a “dwelling in the nether realms” via Torah [study] and [observance of] its commandments (see Tanya, *ibid*, at the end of the chapter), it is similarly so above as well (which in turn sparks an analogous model of divine service on the part of the person): when, at the beginning of the system of *hishtalshelut* [G-d] “set aside and removed his great light to one side,” this is toward subsequent disclosure. To quote (the beginning of) *’Ēs ḥayyim*, “Before any emanated beings were emanated etc., there was a supernal, homogeneous light that filled all existence, and there was no place to establish the worlds etc. He then constricted himself etc. and drew down a straight, thin line etc.” (Gate I (*Derush ’iggullim we-yosher*), Branch 2). Yet even this constriction’s purpose is [not for constriction’s sake but rather toward] drawing down the *qaw* (line) via the *tsimtsum*.⁴⁴⁰

It is evident from Tanya that the purpose of self-renouncement and self-abnegation is to “make G-d a ‘dwelling in the nether realms’”; a careful reading of the original Lurianic source for the doctrine of *tsimtsum* serves to bear out the premise that “*tsimtsum* is for the end of disclosure.” For after Luria’s description of the initial divine self-removal there is the depiction of the extension of the “line” (*qaw*) of light, representing the initial infusion of divine energy into the empty space created by the *tsimtsum* by means of which the actual creation was achieved.⁴⁴¹

The seventh and final proof-text proffered by the Rebbe is the dual teachings of the Besht and the Maggid that had been presented in the 5717 (1957) discourse. It is evident that the Maggidic teaching is an elaboration on the teaching cited in the name of the Besht; the Rebbe cites them in tandem as well.⁴⁴² I therefore count them as a single proof-text. While in 5717 (1957) these teachings had served to substantiate the idea that “bestowal” (*hashpa’ah*) must be preceded by “constriction” (*tsimtsum*), these same reflections are here adduced to demonstrate a broader notion in the reverse direction: that every constriction is intended to result in expansion and bestowal.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1:249-50.

⁴⁴¹ See Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 55.

⁴⁴² The Besht’s teaching is presented more fully in Schochet, ed., *Keter shem tov ha-shalem*, 143, based on its source in *Liqqutim yeqarim*. The conclusion of the Maggid’s teaching reproduces the Besht’s teaching verbatim.

To quote the Ba'al Shem Tov's teaching: "This is the idea of 'G-d said – Let there be light! and there was light.'⁴⁴³ (As explained there,) this means to say '*Ha-shem yitbarakh* said, by the force of the attribute of '*Elokim*, which is the attribute of Severity that constricts the light, because of this there will be a sustainable light which the world can tolerate.' This means that the purpose of *tsimtsum* is not for *tsimtsum*'s sake, but so that through this there will be an assimilable and sustainable light.⁴⁴⁴

Thus the Maggid (may his soul rest in Eden) elaborates, that this explains the scriptural phraseology "and there was light" [[in contrast to] other creations, where it says "and it was so," while here it says "and there was light"].⁴⁴⁵

With regard to all other creations in Genesis 1, Scripture says that G-d uttered 'Let there be etc.,' 'and it was so (*wa-yehi ken*),' while in this instance it states 'and there was light (*wa-yehi 'or*).' This anomaly serves as the basis for the Maggid's interpretation.

Additionally, our sages say that "wherever it is said '*wa-yehi* (and it was),' this is always an expression of anguish." This is because the light that was later actually drawn down (via the *tsimtsum* of "and '*Elokim* said") cannot be compared (*kumt er nit*)⁴⁴⁶ to the light as it is within the *tsimtsum*, namely in the conceptualized purpose of the *tsimtsum* (*vi der oyr shteyt in tsimtsum*).⁴⁴⁷ This means that the light [referenced] in the utterance of 'And '*Elokim* said' is not the [same] light that is subsequently drawn down in fact, [namely] in the short, thin line (to use the terminology of the above-mentioned [passage of] '*Êş hayyim*). [This is why it does not say 'it was so,' since this is light is not identical with [the referent] in 'And G-d said let there be light.'] Rather, it is a different light (*an ander oyr*).⁴⁴⁸ Therefore about this it is said "*wa-yehi*," an expression of anguish and *tsimtsum*; however, "through this a sustainable light is achieved."⁴⁴⁹

The Maggid's teaching as quoted here does not seem entirely to convey the notion that *tsimtsum* is effected in order to enable disclosure. It would seem rather to highlight the misfortune of *tsimtsum*, and that at most it is a necessary evil in order to achieve "sustainable light," meaning a light that pales by comparison to the ideal light envisioned prior to the *tsimtsum*. Likewise, the reference to the *qaw*, the line of light that penetrates the empty space left by the *tsimtsum*, which the Rebbe correlates with the Maggid's exposition, suggests that it does not exhaust the manifestation of divine light within the worlds as originally envisioned; it is merely the light that the cosmos is capable of containing. This depiction would seem to belie, or at any rate reduce, the notion of *tsimtsum* as agent of disclosure writ large. The Rebbe's claim in this regard would seem to be too large to be borne out by this passage. However, it would appear that the Rebbe is relying on the entirety of the Maggidic passage, including parts he does not cite. In the broader teaching the Maggid asserts that "'And there was evening and there was morning' – for from the "evening," i.e. the *tsimtsum*, "morning" was fashioned and engendered," and "the *tsimtsum*... on the contrary, from it came about the true light and the sustainment of the world, as in 'the

⁴⁴³ See above for references.

⁴⁴⁴ Schneerson, *ibid*, 250.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴⁶ Yiddish in the original transcript: "It doesn't come to."

⁴⁴⁷ Yiddish in the original transcript: "As the light stands in [the] *tsimtsum*."

⁴⁴⁸ Yiddish in the original transcript: "Another (different) light."

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

advantage of light from the darkness' (see Ecc. 2:13)." Thus in the final analysis, the citation of this passage is entirely apposite.

Parsing the Discourse of Rayyats

We have seen above how, rather than as in the discourse of 5717 (1957) where the Rebbe develops a reading of the theme of the seventh chapter of *Bosi legani* through commenting on it clause by clause, in 5737 (1977) he narrows his focus to a singular point, that the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* represents the paradox of both constriction (*tsimtsum*) and fullness (*kol*), and that this duality embodies the idea that the purpose of concealment is revelation. He substantiates and supports this notion by reference to multiple proof-texts both within and outside of Rayyats's discourse. The proof-texts presented by the Rebbe are: a) Rayyats's discussion of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet*, representing both self-abnegation and the cornucopia of divine beneficence within the ninth Sephirah of *yesod*; b) Rayyats's comment that in the realm of the holy there is *kol* (all); c) the Zohar's statement (cited in Rayyats) that "one who is minor, he is great"; d) the "known" teaching that one must not be a "trampled threshold" but must "walk in wide ways"; e) the liturgical text that suggests that by being "like dust to all" one's heart is opened to Torah; f) R. Schneur Zalman's teaching that one must practice inner *tsimtsum* in order to ultimately create a dwelling for the divine in this world; g) the teachings of the Besht and the Maggid of Mezeritch to the effect that the emergence of light in the story of creation was predicated on a prior *tsimtsum*.

In the course of this passage the Rebbe quotes or references fourteen sources, aside for Rayyats's own expositions: The Zohar mentioned above, that which is "known" about avoiding the state of a "trampled threshold," Psalm 119, the prayerbook, the book of *Tanya* Ch 49, Proverbs 27, (a teaching that distinguishes between the original *tsimtsum* event and subsequent instances of *tsimtsum* (in the passage we omitted)), the book *Ets hayyim* (Luria), the book *Keter shem tov* (Besht), the book *Liqute torah* (R. Schneur Zalman) (in the footnote), Genesis 1, *'Or torah* (Maggid), *bMeggilah*, and Leviticus Rabbah. Most of these references are incorporated within the passages from the Besht, the Maggid, R. Schneur Zalman, and Rayyats. Note that I am attributing references in the footnotes to the Rebbe as well, even if they are not alluded to in the text of the discourse (such as the reference to *Liqute torah*), as this is an edited (*mugah*) discourse approved by the Rebbe.

Let us pause for a moment and consider the reference to R. Schneur Zalman's *Liqute torah* (*Mas'e*, 95b). This work, a collation of R. Schneur Zalman's oral discourses arranged according to the weekly Torah portion and published by his grandson, the *Tsemakh Tsedek*, is cited in the context of the teachings of the Besht and the Maggid on the words "*wa-yehi 'or*." In the referenced discourse, R. Schneur Zalman offers a similar teaching to that of the Besht and the Maggid, differentiating between an original, ideal light (*yehi 'or*, "let there be light"), and the actual light as it is manifested within the cosmos (*wa-yehi 'or*, "and there was light"). In R. Schneur Zalman's version there is no reference to *tsimtsum*; rather, he discusses how the light immanent within *hishtalshelut* is derived from a transcendent light within the G-dhead. Nevertheless, his teaching does align with those of the Besht and the Maggid. Of note, in a rare instance of direct citation of his master, R. Schneur Zalman does invoke a similar teaching (*we'al derekh zeh*) that was "oft-repeated by the holy mouth of the Maggid, may his soul reside in

Eden.” Thus this reference represents an additional moment of the reception and reworking of an early Hasidic teaching into the Ḥabad system, and thence down through generations to the network of *Bosi legani* discourses.

In the two selections from the Rebbe’s discourses on *Bosi legani* Chapter VII quoted above, he uses two phrases to articulate the *biṭṭul* of the *yod*. In 5717 (1957), as noted in our commentary there, the Rebbe states that “the concept of the *yod* [represents] ‘her self was diminished (‘*az ‘irat garmah*),’ the self-abnegation of the recipient... through which they become a receptacle for the bestowals and *hamshakhot* from above.” In the discourse of 5737 (1977), on the other hand, the *yod*’s quality of “absolute self-abnegation” is characterized by both the phrase “her self was diminished” as well as “she has nothing of her own at all (*let lah mi-garmah klum*).” It is noteworthy that the earlier discourse presents the *biṭṭul* exemplified by “her self was diminished” as the focal theme of the entire seventh chapter, returned to over and over again throughout the discourse’s discussion, without any mention of the term “she has nothing of her own at all.” The latter discourse, by contrast, asserts that “The *biṭṭul* of ‘she has nothing of her own at all’ is the most complete expression of *biṭṭul*, even more so than the *biṭṭul* of ‘her self was diminished,’ for when ‘her self was diminished’ there remains some selfhood... whereas when ‘she has nothing of her own at all,’ she has no selfhood whatsoever.”⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, an accurate understanding of this more absolute *biṭṭul* is predicated on “the precise phraseology” of the term “(the moon) has nothing of her own at all,” as it emphasizes how “she has nothing” in and of herself, yet simultaneously “on account of (and via) her [stance of] *biṭṭul* toward the *yod*... she has everything,” this latter insight undergirding the principal argument of that entire discourse.

The two phrases referred to above are supplied by Rayyats in the previous chapter of *Bosi legani*. There he describes the similarity between the Hebrew letters *dalet* and *resh* in their form as well as in their meaning, for they both imply poverty: “For among the Sephirot [*dalet* is associated] with the Sephirah of *malkhut* (sovereignty) that ‘has nothing of her own at all’... and so too the letter *resh* signifies poverty...” Nevertheless, the *dalet* is distinguished from the *resh* by virtue of its possessing “a *yod* at its rear, the letter *yod* indicating *biṭṭul* and ‘her self was diminished,’ namely [the quality of the Sephirah] *malkhut*... that ‘has nothing of her own at all.’”⁴⁵¹ Before parsing Rayyats’s presentation of the matter, a brief discussion of the sources and contexts of these phrases is apposite.

Both phrases derive from statements in the Zohar. The first (as per the Rebbe’s annotation on Rayyats’s discourse) refers to the following passage:

When the moon and sun were in [a state of] unified attachment, the moon was in [a state of] illumination. Once it separated from the sun and was given charge of its hosts, *its self was diminished*; its light was diminished. (Zohar I, 20a)

A second Zoharic passage expands on this notion as it relates to the letter *yod*⁴⁵²:

‘I am black, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem’ (Song 1:5)... When she is in [a state of] ardent love toward her lover, on account of the intensity of the love which she cannot contain, *she is diminished greatly*, so that no more is seen of her than the smallness of a

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 1:246.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 1:14-15 (Arabic numerals).

⁴⁵² Referenced in 5737 (ibid, 246).

single point. She is then hidden from all her hosts and encampments, and she says ‘I am black,’ for this letter contains no white within it as do other letters. (Zohar III, 191a)

These passages draw on themes found in various places within the Rabbinic literature, most fully in *Midrash Aggadah*:

‘And G-d fashioned the two great lights’ (Gen. 1:16) – when the moon maligned the sun, the Holy One diminished her. What did she say? “Master of the world! Can two kings use a single crown?” He said to her, “If so, go and diminish yourself”... Some say that she became black as coal, and [G-d] decreed that she only radiate on account of the sun... When the Holy One observed that her mind was not set at ease (after G-d’s having appeased her), he increased her hosts, as it says, ‘and the stars’ (ibid). In her honor did he increase her hosts, in the manner of a ruler who is accompanied by the city’s magnates. (*Midrash Aggadah*, Buber ed., Gen. 1:16)

The Zohar draws on the themes of the moon’s diminishment, its blackness, and its accompanying hosts, while also transferring these notions to the “story” of the letter *yod*.

The second phrase is drawn from the Zohar’s comments on Isaiah 52:13:

Come and see! When the Holy One created the world, He fashioned the moon, diminishing her light, for *she has nothing of her own at all*. Because *her self was diminished*, she is radiant on account of the sun... (Zohar I, 181a)

Here both terms are used, aligning with Rayyats’s locution (although the Rebbe does not cite this source in his note, perhaps because the earlier passage provides a fuller account of the moon’s diminishment). The phrase is used elsewhere in Zohar to describe the moon as a “place of poverty” (ibid, 249b), and further on in reference to the *dal* (destitute one) mentioned in Proverbs, 22:9 (ibid, II, 218b). The moon is a symbol for the tenth Sefirah, *malkhut*, a correlation made explicit by R. Isaac Luria (*Ets Hayyim*, 6:5), and one that Rayyats articulates more explicitly with regard to the letter *dalet* and its being characterized by the *yod*.

At first glance the two phrases “her self was diminished” and “she has nothing of her own at all” are two variations on the same notion. When the Rabbis speak of the diminishment of the moon, this may be understood in several ways. One possibility is that the Rabbis conceived of the sun and moon as originally having been of equal light and strength, and the moon’s chastening consisted of its diminished light.⁴⁵³ A second possibility is that the moon’s diminishment refers to its phases of waning.⁴⁵⁴ A third possibility is that initially sun and moon were both inherently radiant, and the moon was diminished by losing radiance of its own and becoming a mere reflector of the sun’s light, and this interpretation is what is suggested by the above passage of the Zohar. Thus the moon’s “self was diminished” by dint of her having “nothing of her own at all.” In Rayyats’s presentation of the matter he likewise appears to equate the two terms, “‘her self was diminished,’ namely *malkhut*... that ‘has nothing of her own at all.’” When the Rebbe, in turn, treats Rayyats’s teaching in the discourse of 5717 (1957), he too simply uses the phrase “her self was diminished,” without the commentary of “she has nothing of her own at all” and without differentiating between the two phraseologies.

⁴⁵³ See Rashi on bHullin 60b, s.v. *ketiv ha-gedolim*.

⁴⁵⁴ See Maharsha ad loc, s.v. *amar lah*.

However, in the 5737 (1977) discourse the Rebbe asserts that “the *biṭṭul* of ‘she has nothing of her own at all’ is the most complete expression of *biṭṭul*, even greater than the *biṭṭul* of ‘her self was diminished,’” distinguishing the terms as two distinct types of *biṭṭul*. He goes on to construct a comprehensive conception of *biṭṭul* as a state of both abnegation and fecundity on the basis of this precise locution. Thus the invocation of both phrases by Rayyats in Chapter VI of *Bosi legani*, and their apparent redundancy, calls for an elucidation by the Rebbe of the category of *biṭṭul* each term implies not only as relates to the topic of the symbolism of the *dalet* expounded in that chapter, but also within the discussion of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* that is developed in Chapter VII.⁴⁵⁵

The warrant for such a differentiation becomes even more apparent upon closer inspection of Rayyats’s citation of these two terms. Careful attention to the presentation of his thoughts reveals that he invokes these phrases in two places, in the course of interpreting each of the Hebrew letters *dalet* and *yod*. Regarding the *dalet* Rayyats explains that “*dalet* is etymologically related to destitution and poverty (*dalut*), which in terms of the Sephirot is [associated with] the Sephirah of *malkhut* (Sovereignty) that ‘has nothing (*de-let lah*) of her own at all.’” A little further along in the chapter Rayyats elaborates on how the form of the *dalet* differs from that of the letter *resh*, on account of having “a *yod* at its rear, the letter *yod* indicating *biṭṭul* and ‘her self was diminished,’ namely [the quality of the Sephirah] *malkhut*... that ‘has nothing of her own at all,’ due to its being utterly abnegated and humble.” The latter reference to the Sephirah *malkhut* is not to suggest that the *yod* correlates with that Sephirah (as one might be led to conclude from the passage at Zohar III, 191a, quoted above); in fact, it correlates with the ninth Sephirah of *yesod* (Foundation), as is made explicit in Chapter VII. Rather, Rayyats is suggesting that the letter *dalet* is associated with *malkhut* on account of the *yod* that is integral to it (unlike the *resh* which has a similar form to the *dalet* but which lacks the *yod*-like protrusion at its rear and is therefore *not* representative of a Sephirah of the sacred realm). Thus he associates the *dalet*/Sephirah of *malkhut* with the term “she has nothing of her own at all,” while the *yod* aspect of it is (also) characterized by the term “her self was diminished.” It follows that the quality of *biṭṭul* that each term conveys varies correspondingly.

The Rebbe’s two discourses on this chapter focus respectively on these two elements: the discourse of 5717 (1957) expatiates on the quality of the *yod*, especially as it represents the Sephirah *yesod* (Kabbalistically conceived of as the source of influence for *malkhut*⁴⁵⁶) and characterized by the phrase “her self is diminished.”

Previously in the discourse the concept of... the self-abnegation of the recipient and the student [was explained]... Here [in Ch VII, Rayyats] explains further an even loftier concept [represented] in the *yod*: as it is from the perspective of the benefactor... The manner in which the influence is drawn down from the master so that they be able to bestow it below to the recipient is also alluded to by the letter *yod*... The overall concept of the *yod*, “her self was diminished,” which is the notion of absolute *biṭṭul*, as it is present in the benefactor is the notion of contraction to the point of total removal.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ A similar transition is seen in the Rebbe’s commentary on Chapter VI, where the first discourse (of 5716 (1956)) refers only to the term *let lah mi-garma klum*, while the second (5736 (1976)) differentiates between it and the term *’az ’irat garmah*. Schneerson, *ibid*, 197 ff.; 206 ff.

⁴⁵⁶ Above, “*Yesod* and *Malkhut*.”

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 232.

While this phrase is likewise applicable to *malkhut*'s own abnegation that allows it to receive, in the 5737 (1977) discourse the Rebbe emphasizes the second phrase as more fully expressing the dynamic of *malkhut*'s receptivity. The deeper significance of *malkhut*'s voiding of self is more starkly expressed by the totalizing characterization of having “nothing of her own at all.” Additionally, this terminology further intimates, somewhat surprisingly, that by having nothing of her own, she has “all.”

The above excursus offers a level of insight into some of how the Rebbe engages his sources, beginning with careful attention to nuance in the language and order of presentation of concepts. But to more fully appreciate how he makes use of the novel perceptions uncovered by his hermeneutics, let us examine the Rebbe's treatment of the teachings by the Besht and the Maggid cited above in each respective discourse.

Emphases in the Besht and the Maggid

Having come to appreciate the nuance in the Rebbe's treatment of the theme of diminishment and *bittul* within the respective discourses, let us turn to examine how he draws on the teachings of the Besht and the Maggid in expounding these themes. The teachings of these founding figures of Hasidism cited both in the 5717 (1957) as well as the 5737 (1977) discourses are the same, and the Maggid's is dependent on the Besht's, as discussed above. However, the Rebbe uses them for disparate purposes.

The teaching of the Besht is adduced in 5717 (1957) to support the Rebbe's premise that the “*yod* of the *mashpi'a*,” the benefactor's abnegation, implies “the notion of contraction to the point of total removal,” and that only in this manner “is it possible to attain bestowal and *hamshakhah* below,” alluding to R. Isaac Luria's concept of *tsimtsum*, divine self-constriction to allow space for creation to exist. The Besht's teaching expresses the same concept, as it emphasizes the emergence of “light” through the power of the divine name *E-lohim*, which represents the divine power of Severity (*gevurah*) and constriction, and only in this way will there be “a sustainable light.” The Rebbe emphasizes the Besht's underscoring the Torah's use of the name *E-lohim* as utterer of the statement “let there be light!” as pointing to the self-diminishment, to the point of total removal, of the benefactor.

In 5737 (1977), on the other hand, the Rebbe emphasizes another aspect of the teaching, citing primarily its conclusion, “because of [the constriction (*tsimtsum*) of the light] there will be a sustainable light which the world can tolerate,” reiterating the notion intimated by R. Isaac Luria that the “constriction's purpose is – not for constriction's sake but rather toward – drawing down the *qaw* (line)” of originative divine energy into the space of creation. (The words between the dashes in the above citation are the Rebbe's own gloss on Luria's exposition.) The Rebbe claims that this reading of Luria is the straightforward sense of the Besht's teaching, and that he is simply quoting it. Not only is the production of sustainable light a consequence of *tsimtsum* (“because of this there will be etc.”), but indeed, read in context it is inescapable that the Besht wishes to emphasize how the Creator employed the “attribute of Severity” for the sole purpose of engendering the light. Thus the Besht's teaching is adduced this time not to emphasize the necessity of the total removal of self on the part of the one bestowing as it is in 5717 (1957), since in this discourse the Rebbe does not focus on the orientation of the bestower, but rather on the fecundity of the recipient's self-abnegation.

The teaching of the Maggid of Mezeritch cited by the Rebbe in these discourses, based on and expanding upon that of the Besht, likewise serves varied purposes within the respective discourses. In the 5717 (1957) discourse, the Rebbe infers from the Maggid's exposition that "in order for there to be a sustainable light... this can only occur via... *tsimtsum*... the point-like *yod*," emphasizing the need for the giver to self-constrict. Furthermore, the Rebbe cites an additional Maggidic teaching which conceives of *tsimtsum* in terms of "a father (who) constricts his intellect and speaks childish words for the sake of his young son... he loves these immature actions so that his son will be entertained etc." This teaching emphasizes the perspective of the father/bestower and their need to self-constrict in order to relate to the child/recipient. This additional passage is apparently adduced because of its reference to *tsimtsum* as "*hokhmah* (the (first/second) Sephirah of Wisdom)," which is correlated with the letter *yod*⁴⁵⁸; nevertheless, its inclusion reflects on the Rebbe's reading of the earlier teaching of the Maggid (in the Rebbe's words, the Maggid "further elucidates" the theme of the preceding citation) to the effect that it expresses the perspective of the bestower.

When the same teaching is treated anew in the discourse of 5737 (1977), it is with an emphasis on the effect of the *tsimtsum* on the resulting light, rather than on the Creator who "constricts Himself via *tsimtsum*," as the Maggid is quoted as saying in 5717 (1957). Once again, the Rebbe's reading of the Maggid is bolstered by reference to an additional source, this time one that is not quoted directly but which is implied by the Rebbe's gloss and is alluded to in the footnotes. When presenting the commentary of the Maggid on the words 'And there was light' (Gen. 1:3), the Rebbe inserts the parenthetical comment that in contrast to "other creations, where it says 'and it was *so*,' ... here it says 'and there was *light*,'" prompting the Maggid to interpret that the created light is one that is unlike the original light that preceded creation, and refers to a new light that came about through *tsimtsum*. In the Rebbe's interpretation, "the light that was later actually drawn down (via the *tsimtsum*...) cannot be compared to the light as it is within the *tsimtsum*... The light [referenced] in the utterance of 'And *Elokim* said' is not the [same] light that is subsequently drawn down in fact." The Rebbe once more adds parenthetically that "this is why it does not say 'it was *so*,' since this is light is not identical with [the referent] in 'And G-d said let there be light.' Rather, it is a different light."

The highlighting of the anomalous phraseology of 'and there was light' rather than 'and it was so' as is the case throughout the story of creation in Genesis 1 is not made explicit by the Maggid in the quoted teaching ('*Or torah*, end sec. 2); however elsewhere in a similar teaching (*ibid*, sec. 183) the Maggid adds "for it appears difficult, for it did not occur as [G-d] had said etc."⁴⁵⁹ The focus on the result of the *tsimtsum* and its inferior product ("a different light"), an aspect of the quoted teaching which is made prominent by recourse to the second, implied teaching of the Maggid's, allows the Rebbe to cite it in support of the notion that he emphasizes in this discourse, namely how the absolute abnegation of the recipient becomes grounds for great advantage, "through this a sustainable light is achieved." That this is indeed the intention of the Maggid's comment is evident from his conclusion of the passage (not directly quoted by the

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 247.

⁴⁵⁹ There the contrast is made between the initial statement of '*yehi ('or)*' vs. the actual creation described by '*wa-yehi ('or)*.' It would seem that the Rebbe is interpreting this passage in his comments as alluding to the contrast between *wa-yehi 'or* regarding the creation of light, and *wa-yehi ken* regarding the other creations.

Rebbe in the discourse) that “on the contrary, from [the *tsimtsum*] there is formed the true light and maintaining of the world, like ‘the advantage of light from darkness’ (Ecc., 2:13).”

Biṭṭul of Mashpi‘a and Meqabel

We noted at the outset that the Rebbe contributes four important insights into his father-in-law’s discourse, observing that in chapters VI and VII Rayyats is actually referring to two kinds of *biṭṭul* (*yod*), that of the bestower and that of the recipient; that both may be encapsulated in the phrase “her self was diminished”; that a more complete *biṭṭul* is conveyed by the phrase “she has nothing of her own at all,” implying abnegation as opposed to mere diminishment; and that at the same time, the latter locution alludes to the potential for “having all” (so long as it is not “of her own”). Taking all the above together, we can discern an additional implication which the Rebbe does not articulate explicitly, but which nevertheless emerges from the absence of discussion of the phrase *let lah mi-garmah klum* in the 5717 (1957) discourse and the absence of any mention of the “self-abnegation of the bestower” in the discourse of 5737 (1977): namely, that the absolute *biṭṭul* connoted by *let lah mi-garmah klum* and the accompanying potential for creativity that it intimates is relevant only for the recipient but not the bestower. In other words, the *mashpi‘a* does not require and/or is unable to achieve an abnegation of self to the extent utter emptiness. What warrant does the Rebbe find in the words of Rayyats to prompt these understandings?

At first glance, Chapter VII would seem to continue the theme of the sixth chapter, as we observed earlier, with no direct mention of the role of the bestower, nor any indication that the focus of the discussion has changed. However, noticing that Rayyats associates the *yod* with the creation of “the world-to-come,” with “the Sefirah of *yesod* (Foundation), from which *malkhut* (Sovereignty) receives,” and with the word *kol* (all), notions which suggest the possession and disbursement of beneficence, rather than with self-effacement, we can begin to appreciate the warrant for the Rebbe’s reading. We should take note, nevertheless, that this warrant is activated in two distinct ways in the Rebbe’s two discourses: in 5717 (1957) he emphasizes the perspective and orientation of the *mashpi‘a*, while in 5737 (1977) he homes in on the influence of the *mashpi‘a* as it is present within the *meqabel*. To the second insight, once the *yod* is seen as being presented from multiple angles (as it is present in the recipient, in the bestower, and as it forms the bridge that binds them to each other), it is entirely appropriate to apply the characterization of the *yod* supplied in the sixth chapter, namely that it is a diminishing of self (*‘az‘irat garmah*), to each of these situations. Here too, Rayyats alludes to such a reading indirectly by referring to the *yod* (in Chapter VII) as “smallest (*ze‘ira*) of all the letters.”

With regard to the term “*let lah mi-gramah klum* (she has nothing of her own at all),” we noted earlier that it is cited in conjunction with the correlative phrase *‘az‘irat garmah*, both by the Zohar and by Rayyats, from which we might infer that the former term is no more than synonymous with the latter. Yet, as we have already discussed, concerning the character of the *dalet* (recipient, Sefirah of *malkhut*) Rayyats only references the phraseology “she has nothing of her own at all”, while applying both this phrase and “her self was diminished” to the *yod* (benefactor, Sefirah of *yesod*), suggesting that he indeed distinguishes between the types of *biṭṭul* each represents. Let us consider this observation a little further.

When Rayyats discusses the *dalet*'s distinguishing characteristic, the “*yod* at its rear” (unlike the letter *resh*), he elaborates:

The letter *yod* indicates *biṭṭul* and ‘her self was diminished,’ namely [the quality of the Sephirah] *malkhut*... that ‘has nothing of her own at all.’ This is because her [orientation is one of] utter *biṭṭul* and lowliness. This [correlates with *malkhut*'s quality of] *biṭṭul* and self-renunciation in relation to the other Sephirot, by dint of which she becomes a receiving vessel. (BL, 15)

Here Rayyats offers an interpretation of the phrase “her self was diminished”: it describes the self-renunciation which allows *malkhut* to be a receptacle. Thus this term ascribes value to *malkhut*'s lowliness, its self-removal creating space for the gifts of others. In turn, the concept of *malkhut*'s self-diminishment justifies the related term “she has nothing of her own at all,” pointing to the cause and the significance of this emptiness (she is diminished because she has nothing of her own). Nevertheless, as already noted, the latter term also appears without explanation and prior to the introduction of the import of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet*, implying that the two terms are not entirely interchangeable. In Rayyats's words,

The [letters] *dalet* and *resh* are alike both in form as well as in meaning. *Dalet* is related to destitution (*dalut*) and poverty, which [correlates] among the Sephirot with the Sephirah of *malkhut* (sovereignty) that “has nothing of her own at all”... and likewise the letter *resh* signifies poverty and destitution, as is written, ‘The ruin of the poor is their impoverishment (*resham*)’ (Prov. 10:15). (BL 14)

In this instance, no comment is made on the phrase. Significantly, “having nothing” as presented here is a description that is ostensibly equally applicable to the letter *resh* as to the *dalet*, and hence without positive value (as Rayyats elaborates regarding the *resh* in Ch. VII); it is only through the subsequent exposition on the notion of the self-renunciation of *malkhut* that this phrase takes on a positive valence. Restated slightly differently, the positive coloring given to the “lack” of the *dalet* in contradistinction to the *resh* is on account of the former's association with the diminishment of the *yod*, which is unambiguously positive. It follows, therefore, that the self-abnegation articulated in the phrase “she has nothing of her own at all” is noninterchangeable with that expressed in the locution “her self was diminished.”

By the same token it becomes more obvious why *let lah mi-garmah klum* is applicable to the receiving entity alone, and not to the one that bestows, as is implied by the Rebbe's discourse on this topic. The giver cannot be said to “have nothing of their own,” as their function is unequivocally to transmit beneficence. Rayyats's use of the term can be seen to be exclusively in the context of the Sephirah of *malkhut*, the cosmic recipient, and never in relation to the position of the bestower or that which is transmitted to *malkhut*. That precisely the recipient, who indeed “has nothing,” is capable of having everything as a result, and the warrant for this in the language of Rayyats, was amply and explicitly demonstrated by the Rebbe in his 5737 (1977) discourse. Thus we can see the ways that the Rebbe expounds innovative insights, while ensuring that he is essentially merely “repeating” what Rayyats said, who is himself “repeating” the teachings of his predecessors.

Textual Themes and Contextual Thematization

As with the text from 5717 (1957), the passage of the 5737 (1977) discourse that we have just examined exemplifies the thematization of midrashic intertextuality, the making present of the canonical authorities, that the Rebbe's *Bosi legani* series performs broadly speaking. The classical Jewish sources, biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic, liturgical and Kabbalistic, are folded into the teachings of the early Hasidic masters, the Besht and the Maggid of Mezeritch. Their enlightenment is in turn refracted through the insights of R. Schneur Zalman and Rayyats, arrayed within an aesthetic supplied by the Rebbe. The above intertextual network represents a link in the larger endeavor of the Rebbe's to cite each of the masters in the Ḥabad lineage (including the Besht and the Maggid) in each of the *Bosi legani* discourses. The assumption implicit in this mode of presentation is that when Rayyats spoke, all the rebbes spoke through him, and continued to be available through his person. By the same token, the Rebbe's part in unmasking this intertextuality in his own discourses, especially as they are those which solemnize his role as successor to the seat of Ḥabad, intimate similarly with regard to himself.

In the previous chapter I have more fully demonstrated that this intertextuality within the Ḥabad sources represents not only a shared universe of discourse among the rebbes but a deliberate enactment of their presence.⁴⁶⁰ At present I would like to substantiate the notion that the Rebbe saw his role as being the channel for his predecessors, that through him they are accessible, and that his forebears accomplished the same. Particularly at moments when the question of the Rebbe's succession was somewhat open we can find this notion stated more explicitly. One such moment was at the *farbrengen* on the holiday of Purim, 5711 (1951), only a month after R. Menachem Mendel had officially taken office. Well into the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe began to belittle himself, saying things like, "who am I, and what am I?" implying that he was unfit for the role of rebbe. Turning to one of the elder Hasidim, R. Menachem Mendel questioned how he was able to restrain himself from crying at the current state of affairs when he had witnessed "real" rebbes, namely Rashab and Rayyats.

Some of the elder Hasidim approached the Rebbe and said that Hasidim do not wish to hear such talk. One of them proclaimed, "You are the Rebbe, it is one progression (*hemshekh*) and one chain [going back to] the Alter Rebbe!" He then requested schnapps [to toast *lekhayim*] of the Rebbe, saying that he wishes to receive schnapps "from the Alter Rebbe!" The Rebbe smiled, and poured him some schnapps...

Among other things, the Rebbe said: "After the departure of the Rebbe [Rashab] *nishmosoy eden*, my father-in-law the Rebbe once said that he does not say about his father "his soul resides in Eden," for why say "his soul resides in *Eden*" when it is easier and better to say "his soul resides in *me*?" (The Rebbe concluded:) Similarly with regard to the Rebbe – I do not say "his soul resides in Eden," but rather "his soul resides in me!"⁴⁶¹

Beyond this formal thematization of making the mythic and bygone tangible and real, as was true for the 5717 (1957) discourse, here too specific teachings convey to the audience truths about their own situation and experience. As discussed above, the topic of the self-abnegation of

⁴⁶⁰ Ch Intertextuality, "Golden Chain."

⁴⁶¹ Schneerson, *Hitva'aduyot*, 2:326. See also the *farbrengen* of 15 Tammuz in Schneerson, *Hitva'aduyot* – 5745, vol. 4, 2487, *passim*, et al.

the letter *yod* and the diminishment of the moon are nearly explicitly correlated with the moment of the Hasid absorbing the discourse being delivered by the rebbe. In a broader sense, this stance of surrender to the personality of the rebbe is valid in all aspects of the rebbe-Hasid relationship. R. Menachem Mendel himself evinces just such an attitude of acceptance of his father-in-law's authority, as is evident from his pre-leadership writings. In the well-known *Reshimat Hayoman* (diary notations), R. Menachem Mendel meticulously recorded teachings, stories, comments, and behaviors of Rayyats that he heard from him or observed over many years, without discriminating between the profound and the arguably trivial, presumably because he did not consider any word of Rayyats's as trivial.⁴⁶² Similarly, from the sample of letters that we have of R. Menachem Mendel addressed to his father-in-law there can be discerned a careful attention to the tasks the latter had delegated to him, and a reverence for and faith in Rayyats's powers as a rebbe.⁴⁶³

The discussion in the 5737 (1977) discourse regarding the dynamic between bestower and recipient, *yod* and *dalet*, contains a subtext articulated by the Rebbe and understood by the Hasid that pertains to the dynamic between the Rebbe himself and Rayyats, and through him to the generations that went before. In his *Bosi legani* the Rebbe actualizes the principle espoused by Rayyats that “the *yod* is the beginning of all letters,” that “all *hamshakhot* and bestowals below... [begin] with the point that is the *yod*”: as the *yod* contains in condensed form all the various consequent shapes and meanings of the rest of the alphabet, the Rebbe likewise sees every point within *Bosi legani* as a (potential) reverberation of the entirety of the Ḥabad heritage. Like the ninth Sefirah of *yesod*, Rayyats receives and absorbs all the beneficence (*hashpa'ah*) of the Sephirot, read: rebbes, that preceded him, as is demonstrated by the uncovering of their respective teachings within the chapters of *Bosi legani*. Exemplifying the oft-quoted saying that “when one grasps some of the essence, one grasps it all,”⁴⁶⁴ each word of Rayyats's, even a discourse that does not explicitly draw on teachings from each of the “illustrious ancestors” of Ḥabad, can be found to be illuminated by their *khassides*. Rayyats acts as the Sefirah of *yesod*, uniting heaven (the Ḥabad ancestors) and earth (the seventh generation). He transmits the *hashpa'ah* to the Rebbe, who is ostensibly “reviewing” his father-in-law's words. In so doing, however, the Rebbe does not merely repeat, but unpacks the teachings in *Bosi legani* (in 5717 (1957)), and also proceeds to develop and apply them (in 5737 (1977)). Thus he embodies the mystical notion of *šimšum bi-shvil ha-gilyu* (“constriction for the sake of revelation”) expounded on in his discourse, taking the *yod*, the bullet-point statements within Rayyats's discourse, and revealing their profound message for all areas of life (“worlds, souls, Torah etc.”). In similar fashion, the Hasid understands that they are to realize the messages contained in the discourse in these varied areas of their own life.

I want to emphasize clearly here that the correlation between the relationship of *yesod* and *malkhut* described in the discourse and that of Rayyats and the Rebbe is not merely to draw an analogy. The reciprocal nature of the Sephirotic realm and its construal as a network maps directly onto the “golden chain” of the Ḥabad masters, who were explicitly associated with the Sephirot. This is evidenced, for instance, within the *Bosi legani* corpus itself. In his discourse of 5746 (1986) the Rebbe did not mention the Besht and the Maggid of Mezeritch by name as he

⁴⁶² Schneerson, *Reshimat ha-yoman*. See description of this source in Heilmann & Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 57 (and fn89).

⁴⁶³ Y. Schneerson, *Igrot qodesh*, vol. 15. See esp. 63 and 101.

⁴⁶⁴ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 2:561.

did other years. In a supplementary *sikhe* following the *maymer* he referenced “a talk by the *bal hahilulo* (*ba’al ha-hillula*, “master of the celebration (passing)”⁴⁶⁵)” where Rayyats conveyed: “The Ba’al Shem Tov and the Maggid are at the level of *keter*; *keter* consists of ‘*atiq* and ‘*arikh*. The Ba’al Shem Tov is the level of ‘*atiq*, while the Maggid is the level of ‘*arikh*.” On the basis of this teaching the Rebbe suggested that by speaking about these levels in the discourse, he had in fact referenced these two founding Hasidic figures.⁴⁶⁶

That identification with the Sephirot holds true for all the rebbes of Ḥabad becomes clear from the continuation of the above-mentioned *sikhe* of Rayyats:

The *Alter Rebbe* [corresponds with] *ḥokhmah*, the *Mitteler Rebbe*, *binah*. My great-grandfather the *Tsemakh Tsedek*, *da’at*. This is I heard [related] in public. In private (*yekhides*) I heard until *neṣaḥ* and *hod*, and further... (*Keter shem tov*, 455, fn134)

The point is put even more finely by the Rebbe, who commented:

It was generally quite rare for my father-in-law to speak about himself; however, on *Simkhat Torah* (“rejoicing with the Torah,” the final day of the Sukkot festival) of 5705 (1944), my father-in-law spoke about the verse ‘And to *Joseph* he said: Blessed by G-d is his land etc.’ (Deut. 33:13) [that is read in the Torah reading of that day]. So that there be no possibility of misconstruing who he was referring to, he then said [the above-cited teaching, concluding] “and further.” Now after the Sephirah of *hod* comes the Sephirah of *yesod* and so forth, and the Sephirah of *yesod* is the theme of *Joseph*...⁴⁶⁷

The suggestion here is that by saying “and further,” Rayyats was alluding to his own Sephirah of *yesod*, and that his juxtaposition of this teaching with the verse referring to *Joseph* served to clarify that he was applying this verse to himself and his “tribe” of Ḥabad Hasidim. Some Hasidim relate that when the Rebbe said “the Sephirah of *yesod* – and so forth,” he put extra emphasis on the words “and so forth (*vekhulu*),” hinting at his own position as the Sephirah of *malkhut*.⁴⁶⁸ Thus the relationship between the Sephirot of *yesod* and *malkhut* discussed in our discourses are directly relevant, as these Sephirot correlate precisely with the sixth and seventh rebbes. In 5717 this correlation is made practically explicit, in the identification of *yesod* with *Yosef* (*Joseph*), an allusion to Rayyats as mentioned above.

Beyond the suggestion (in the 5737 (1977) discourse as in all the other *Bosi legani* discourses) that all the rebbes in the Ḥabad line are being made present through it, a suggestion alluded to but not made explicit,⁴⁶⁹ this discourse also offers a direct reflection on its own potency, articulating how it is offering the desired revelation and making accessible that which lies beyond. This explication conveys the metamessage that the discourse not only opens the channels of access vertically to the ethereal that lies beyond empirical reality, but also horizontally across history, to both the mythical past as mentioned, as well as ahead to the eschatological time to come.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁵ See reference in Ch Background, “*Bosi Legani*.”

⁴⁶⁶ See Schneerson, *ibid*, 2:556, and fns30 and 31.

⁴⁶⁷ Schneerson, *Hitva’aduyot* – 5727, 1:154.

⁴⁶⁸ Leibel Schapiro, “Rabbi Schapiro’s *zichronos*,” WhatsApp group, #36 about emphasis on *etc*.

⁴⁶⁹ See Ch Background, “*Bosi le-ganni*.”

⁴⁷⁰ In this I coincide with Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 276 ff.

The discussion in the 5737 (1977) discourse focuses largely on the theme of “irradiating *’ahor* (“the posterior”) with the light of *panim* (“the anterior”).”⁴⁷¹ This, as intimated above, is a related topic to that of the desired end of the concealment of *tsimtsum* being the disclosure that follows. The concealment of the divine presence and the concomitant sense of selfhood such occlusion engenders in the process of Creation is conceived of as being an unenlightened state of *’ahor*, while the manifestation of divine consciousness that is facilitated specifically as a result of such concealment is the luminous *panim* that traverses the preceding darkness. This duality of *panim* and *’ahor* and the interplay between them of the infusion of the incandescent within the pedestrian is then observed in multiple realms, including that of the soul (souls of the world of *’Ašilut* (emanation), “anterior,” and those of the world of *Beri’ah* (creation), “posterior”⁴⁷²), prayer (the experience of *yihuda ’ila’ah* (“superior unity”) and *yihuda tata’ah* (“inferior unity”)⁴⁷³), and study of Torah (*galya* (the revealed (legal) aspect) of Torah and *penimiyut* (the internal (mystical) aspect) of Torah)⁴⁷⁴).

In summation, the Rebbe says that “this idea (that the aspect of *panim* must be drawn down into the aspect of *’ahor*) is the notion that the ultimate [divine] intention is that ‘the primary [place of] the *Shekhinah* should be in the nether realms,’”⁴⁷⁵ recalling the Midrashic teaching at the beginning of the *hemshekh*. The assertion that the primary residence of the divine was originally on the physical plane, which had become an agenda statement for the Rebbe in his opening discourse, is now correlated with channeling *panim* into *’ahor*, so that the modes of conduct to which the Hasid is exhorted to in this discourse are shown to be the pathways for achieving that utopian ideal. Citing the kabbalistic parallel to the notion of the “primary *Shekhinah*” in Lurianic writings, the Rebbe speaks of the revelation of “the interior aspect (*penimiyut*) of *’atiqa qadisha* (the holy ancient one).”⁴⁷⁶ Any discussion of what this abstraction represents is beyond the scope of this project; suffice it to say that it refers to the innermost sphere of the divine self. This is the ultimate vista of *panim* that is supposed to be disclosed in the future time-to-come.

Admittedly the reality of *penimiyut ’atiqa qadisha* is inaccessible in the fallen, pre-messianic existence; nevertheless, “it is our actions and labors throughout the period of exile that draw down the recompense of the messianic age and the subsequent [ages]” (ibid), such that there must be some “empowerment” that we are afforded now that can serve as an “immediate preparation (*hakhanah qerovah*)” for such a phenomenon to come about. This empowerment is identified as “the interiority of the Torah (which derives from the interiority of *’atiqa qadisha*),” which is in turn disclosed as “the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov, and the subsequent noble leaders (*nešsi’im*), down to the master of the *hillula* (Rayyats),” the contents of the Hasidic, and especially the Habad, corpus. Stated plainly,

⁴⁷¹ Schneerson, *Bati le-ganni*, 1:252 et passim.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 254-55 and references. See Ch Background “Sefhirot and Worlds.”

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 259-60 and references. See Mangel, “Shaar Hayichu,” in Kehot, *Tanya*, 312 ff, et passim.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 256-59 and references. See The Chassidic Heritage Series, *On the Essence of Chassidus* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society), for a comprehensive exposition of the Rebbe’s teaching on this topic.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, 260.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. For this term see Ch Background, “Sefhirot and Worlds,” and “5737”; *On the Essence of Chassidus*, 26. The subtleties of this concept are expanded on in the discourse *Padah be-shalom – 5726* (Schneerson, *Meluqat*, 6:45 ff), and references.

This means that through “your wellsprings burst forth – specifically – to the outside” (which is the aspect of the interiority of Torah that derives from the interiority of *‘atiqa qadisha* etc. which leads to divine service from the interiority of the soul etc.), “the master will arrive,” referring to the messianic king – (which is the disclosure of the interiority of *‘atiqa qadisha*, the primary *Shekhinah*, in the nether realms). (Ibid)

Although couched in Ḥabad jargon, the Rebbe’s message is straightforward and unambiguous: The messiah had told the Besht that he would come “when your wellsprings burst forth to the outside” (as recounted in the Besht’s letter).⁴⁷⁷ The wellsprings instantiate the *panim*, “deriving” as they do from the interiority of *‘atiqa qadisha*, and as a result they are uniquely efficacious to reveal the *panim* within the individual, and to disclose the interiority of *‘atiqa qadisha*, which cosmic disclosure being the defining characteristic of the messianic epoch in the Ḥabad understanding. That this revelation is identical with the indwelling of “the primary *Shekhinah* in the nether realms” is stated explicitly, and is elaborated on in the subsequent passage in the discourse. There the Rebbe once again identifies the “the overall gist of the master of the *hillula*’s discourse,” noting that it is the idea of “drawing the aspect of *panim* into *‘ahor*, like the *yod* within the *dalet*”,⁴⁷⁸ since this dynamic is nothing less than the presence of the primary *Shekhinah* in the nether realms, or in terms used above (to articulate “the quintessential point of this *hemshekh*”), that “he, may he be blessed, might have a dwelling in the nether realms.”

Thus, the moment of the discourse’s delivery envelopes within itself the opening of access to the innermost “self” of divinity, even as this cannot be disclosed until the eschaton; the wellsprings of the Besht, identified with

the secreted stores... all the precious treasure... which [the king’s] ancestors amassed as well as what the king himself [accumulated]... distributed... via the military officers and the army generals... ‘your heads of your tribes,’ the heads and noble leaders of Israel of each generation... ‘an extension of Moses is in each generation’ (Zohar III, 273a), down to the noble leader of our generation, the master of the *hillula*...⁴⁷⁹

making present the lineage of the Ḥabad forebears; and in so doing, provides a foretaste of the utopian disclosure of the future-to-come. The orientation toward sources that is constitutive of midrashic intertextuality is thus explicit in the very teachings of this discourse.

The Ḥabad discourse speaks at multiple levels: at the theoretical, esoteric level, at the level of the social, contextual reality, and it also constitutes a contributing factor to the formation of the very sociocultural milieu that it speaks to. Furthermore, from the perspective of the *maymer*, there is no stark distinction between these three strata; the theoretical discussion is potent and dynamic, speaking not *of* its subject, but rather speaking its subject into reality, much as the divine utterance spoke the world into being in Genesis.

⁴⁷⁷ Ch Background, “Promulgation of Heritage,” and references.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 260-61.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

‘His head is fine gold; his locks (*qewuṣotayw*) undulate (*taltalim*), black like a raven [Song, 5:11]’... Rabbi Ze’ira said: Even those matters that seem to you to be [mere] thorn-like serifs (*qoṣin*) in the Torah... are capable of destroying the world and turning it into a ruin (*tel*)... ‘Hear O Israel, *Hawayah* is our G-d, *Hawayah* is one (‘*eḥad*)’ – if you write the *dalet* as a *resh*, you will destroy the entire world; ‘For you shall not prostrate yourself to another (‘*aḥer*) god’ – if you write the *resh* as a *dalet* you will have destroyed the entire world.

– Leviticus Rabbah, 19:2

Chapter 6 – Conclusion: The Word as Lived

Having carefully parsed exemplary passages of *Bosi legani* and having observed the intimate enmeshment of the subject of the discourses with their lived context, I would like to survey briefly the way these discourses deal with language itself. If I am arguing that “the word” (quite literally, the “*ma’amar*”) is the keystone of the Ḥabad Hasidic universe, we would do well to examine how the midrashic intertextuality and contextuality laid out in the previous chapter operate within the discourse on language within *Bosi legani*. I reemphasize that the passages (and discourses) selected are not exhaustive but exemplary, and precisely because they are not materially different from other discourses of the Ḥabad corpus, as will have become evident from our citations of the Rebbe’s intertextual references. Our discussion will lead us into a broader expansion on some consequences of themes within the *Bosi legani* texts as they may be seen to have played out in the Rebbe’s term of leadership, and point to questions that may be pursued in future studies. Let us return, then, to the Ḥabad theory of letters (surveyed in the previous chapter).

Dynamic Characters

In our earlier discussion we encountered the concept that the letters of the Torah possess a dynamic nature representing *hamshakhot* (downward channeling of divine energy), and the corollary that a thing’s name embodies its life force. In Chapter Seven of *Bosi legani* there is one segment of a larger discussion (chs. 5-10) regarding the significance of the word *qeresh* (panel (of the desert tabernacle in Exodus, 26)).⁴⁸⁰ This word is analyzed both as an anagram for *sheqer* (falsehood), as well as through probing the meanings of its constituent letters. Chapter Seven continues the discussion of Chapter Six, which focuses on the (minute) differences between the letters *resh* (the second letter of *qeresh*) and *dalet* (taking a cue from the Midrashic passage that is this chapter’s epigraph), both as regards their respective shapes, which differ only in regard to the presence of an additional smidgen at the rear of the *dalet*’s roof, as well as in the context of the synonymity of their names, both relating to poverty (*dalut* (destitution) and *reshut* (impoverishment)). The *resh* is deemed a letter that is “seen on the side of evil,” as it lacks the smidgen, identified as the letter *yod*, at its rear, rendering it deficient.⁴⁸¹ On the other hand, the

⁴⁸⁰ Ch Insert, “Summaries of *Bosi Legani*.”

⁴⁸¹ See the discourses on the following chapter (8) regarding the *resh*’s development into the letter *qof*, [??].

dalet is a healthy letter, that will develop into the well-balanced *hê*, on account of its possessing the additional smidgen of the *yod* at its rear.

We have noted that the significance of the *yod* at the *dalet*'s rear is defined by Rayyats as the position of *bittul*, minimizing the self and recognizing its inadequacy, becoming an "empty vessel" that is capable of receiving. "This is [the idea] that [the Sefirah of] *malkhut* of '*ashlut* becomes a point beneath [the Sefirah of] *yesod*."⁴⁸² In Chapter Seven this discussion continues, and the *yod* is further envisioned as the letter by which the world-to-come was created, and is characterized as both the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and simultaneously the beginning of each letter in its written form. We also discussed the Rebbe's comments on this subject, to the effect that "all *hamshakhot* and bestowals below come about via letters," and that "'ot (letter) is of the etymology of '*ata boqer* (the morning has arrived)' (Is. 21:12)," indicating bestowal below.

The Rebbe associated Rayyats's idea with the notion that a mentor must practice a measure of self-denial in order to transmit bestowal to their protégé.⁴⁸³ This *bittul* constitutes the mentor's devotion to the disciple's edification, and is represented by the diminutive *yod*. That this diminished state is the precursor to the expansiveness of bestowal is enacted in the *yod*'s being the "beginning of all letters." It is here that the Rebbe invokes the notion that letters are *hamshakhot*, conduits for (divine) energy, an idea spelled out in *Tanya* and elaborated on in other of R. Schneur Zalman's teachings.⁴⁸⁴ Among those further elaborations is this very etymological association of '*ot* (letter) and '*ata* (arrived), connoting the letter's function of "bringing (en)light(en)ment." Letters are conceived of as possessing dynamism, comprising events rather than static entities. The Rebbe thus articulates Rayyats's (unstated) premise, that the extension of a letter (from an initial *yod*) instantiates the bestowal (*hamshakhah*) from benefactor to recipient.

Further along in the discourse, the Rebbe summarizes the overall implication of this "theory of the letters" for the subject of the seventh chapter of *Bosi legani*, which (on the Rebbe's reading) touches on three aspects of the significance of the *yod*:

The Sefirah *yesod*... unit[es] bestower and recipient. This means that once there is the recipient's submission (*bittul*) (the first aspect of the *yod*), and the benefactor's submission (the second aspect of the *yod*), the third aspect of the *yod* is present which joins benefactor and recipient. This means that all "letters," all *hamshakhot* from above, will be drawn down and will ultimately be implanted (*qelīṭah*) below within the recipient. ("5717," ??)

The *hamshakhah* of the letters parallels the *hamshakhah* from bestower to recipient. The shape of the letter *yod*, being point-like, represents its particular manner of *hamshakhah* (as below), namely the requirement for self-abnegation on the parts of both mentor and disciple to achieve a *hamshakhah* that will be "implanted." The *yod* also embodies the point of contact between bestower and recipient, thus representing the entirety of the process of *hamshakhah*. It thus serves as the basis ("beginning") for the letters as a whole, as they depict the array of possible *hamshakhot*, each containing the three properties betokened by the *yod*.

⁴⁸² B.1., 15 (Arabic numerals). See (background chapter) for the elucidation of the kabbalistic terminology here.

⁴⁸³ Relevant passages of 5717.

⁴⁸⁴ *Tanya*, 338 ff.; references in *B.L.*, "5717," II [fn25], as well as in the references at those locations. See also *Liqqutei Torah*, Leviticus, 13b.

In the discourse of 5737, the Rebbe cites additional elements of R. Schneur Zalman's theory of the dynamic letters. Referring to Rayyats's assumption that an analysis of the letters of *qeresh* would yield insight into the word's mystical import, the Rebbe elaborates:

There is the well-known teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov that the names by which creations are called in the Holy Tongue is their very vitality and existence (*Tanya*, ??). Just as there is the vitality [conferred] by the word as a whole (the name), likewise each individual letter of the word embodies the *hamshakhah* of a particular and specific vital force and power. The written letter forms indicate the "shape" of this *hamshakhah*, as explained in *Sha'ar ha-yihud weha-'emunah* [?].

Once again the Rebbe supplies the background for Rayyats's assumptions as articulated in *Tanya*. The word constitutes the "very vitality and existence" of the thing, while the constituent letters of the word represent the specific component powers, the aggregate of which total the entirety of the thing's existence. This is because each letter is a depiction of the channel of a specific power, as well as the course this drawing down takes. The Rebbe continues:

This (specified) vital force also relates to the vitality of the word in its entirety. Although the vital force of the entire word is the "light that surmounts all [the individual letters]," which comprises and rivals all the specific kinds of powers and vital forces of the [individual] letters (*ibid*, ??), meaning that it is incomparably superior to the vital forces of the letters... nevertheless, it has been explained in several places that even this (surmounting) light relates to the specific letters. This is also [evident] from the precise phraseology "a light that surmounts *all of them*." Although it is a light that is incomparable to the light of the individual letters, it nevertheless "surmounts" via "all of them," the individual letters. ("5737," ??)

The Rebbe has now raised a potential challenge to Rayyats's approach of querying the letters to extract the meaning of the word by introducing an apparently conflicting notion articulated in *Tanya*, namely the idea of the "light that surmounts all of them." The meaning of a word is not merely derived from the sum total of its letters, but can be conceived of as a novel and superior "light" that arises once all the letters are properly arranged. To reconcile Rayyats's approach with his ostensible source in *Tanya*, the Rebbe cites an interpretation of this term supplied by Rayyats's father, Rashab, to the effect that "the light that surmounts," while indeed distinct from and superior to the aggregate of the respective energies of the letters, still requires their presence. The overall meaning of the word must remain tied to the significance of the individual letters as well. So, the operation the Rebbe does here is twofold: he displays the theory which underlies Rayyats's discussion and its source in *Tanya*, as well resolves an apparent difficulty with Rayyats's implementation of that theory.

Bitul as presented here plays several roles. The self-effacement of the recipient allows them to receive, while that of the mentor allows them to give. It also characterizes the process of transmission from giver to recipient in the diminution of that which is transferred to a "digestible" state. In its effacement it is prolific (as elaborated at length in the previous chapter drawing on the discourse of 5737 (1977)), serving as the basis for *hamshakhah*, the sprouting forth of creative energy, as well as access to a "light" beyond that which is bestowed.

Thus far for theory. In an earlier chapter we raised the topic of “midrashization,” the mutual illumination and interpretation of authoritative extra-biblical fonts of information in light of the Biblical texts, and of the Bible in light of other accepted truths. In the discourses of the Ḥabad rebbes the process of midrashization does not stop at the limits of the text, but is played out in the Hasidic *sitz im leben* within which the texts are produced. Let us return briefly to our discussion of Midrash, and specifically to the phenomenon of thematization that Boyarin notices in the Midrashic texts. Thematization takes a number of forms, parallels to which may be found in the Ḥabad corpus. Particularly, two elements of such thematizing in Midrash were discussed above. The first is that the ambiguity of the biblical texts is reproduced in the multi-vocality of the Midrashic text; this element is present in the Ḥabad texts as well. However, here it is fused with the second trait noted above, that of Midrash shaping the Rabbis’ perception of their lives and its significance.

To state this more clearly, Boyarin raises these two characteristics of Midrash to illustrate two aspects of its intertextuality. Midrashic thematization of its subjects of inquiry embodies two of three layers of intertextuality that Boyarin remarks on, that of the text being “made up of a mosaic of ... citation of earlier discourse,” i.e. an intertextual engagement with other texts; and that of a text’s dialogical nature, “contesting [its] own assertions as an essential part of the structure of [its] discourse,” i.e. an engagement with a presumed intertext that may exist within the author’s head and/or may not be a text at all, strictly speaking.⁴⁸⁵ Boyarin’s exposition on thematization is a development of the consequences of these elements of intertextuality, demonstrating how the complexities of the interactions of biblical and Midrashic texts manifest these aspects in particularly rich and textured ways. The nuanced ways Midrash interacts with Rabbinic life represents an additional realm of intertextual reverberation, where the texts dialogue with the intertext of cultural codes, ideologies and assumptions.⁴⁸⁶ What I will argue in what follows is that in the Ḥabad discourse both of these elements unite. Thematization can be found not only when ambiguity in one text (e.g.) responds to ambiguity in another, but also and especially in the phenomenon of the text being perceived as both idea and cultural artifact; the text, the theories it expresses, its production, and its tangible presence in aural or orthographic form, is seen as dynamic, while cultural dynamics are understood to be textual, composed of letters. Thus questions of whether the text represent extra-textual events, or at any rate abstractions that correspond with real-world phenomena, or whether reality as a whole is just another kind of text, best understood by recourse to the linguistic entity, become irrelevant. The distinction between teaching and life, and the very identification of a vehicle and a tenor in the text-culture binary, becomes entirely dissolved.

The notion of *biṭṭul* has been treated at length in our citation from the *Bosi legani* texts; there is arguably an additional aspect of *biṭṭul* enacted in these *maymorim*, namely the effacement of the border between text and lived reality. I will present the thematization of the very concepts being discussed in the above selections from the Rebbe’s discourses of the seventh year that is being practiced in these discourses, on several levels. First of all, the notion of letters as paths of transmission is enacted in the very event of the delivery of the Ḥabad discourse, a phenomenon very similar to what we have observed regarding the discussion of *mashpi’a*

⁴⁸⁵ Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 12.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

(bestower) and *meqabel* (recipient) in the previous chapter. In the case of the discourse, its letters not only transmit information from the rebbe to his Hasidim; the very artifact of the discourse itself concretizes the relationship between them. This is particularly true of the discourses of *Bosi legani*, where it is evident that their very recital is the re-presentation (making present anew) of Rayyats in the lives of his devotees, both by repeating his words as well as by interpreting them, so that the discourse's letters convey the rebbe to his adherents.

“Whoever repeats a teaching in the name of its originator should envision [themselves] as if the originator (*ba'al ha-shemu'ah*) stands before them” [p*Shabbat*, 1:2]. “Any scholar whose teaching is repeated in this world, his lips murmur in the grave” [b*Bekhorot*, 31b]. To the Hasid who has absorbed the attitudes conveyed in these Talmudic dicta, the recitation of the discourse is a reenactment and re-presentation of an original, living context and communication.⁴⁸⁷ The word, *divrey eloykim khayim* (words of the Living G-d), is always a living word; it expresses a living deity, emerges from a living author, and constitutes a communication of vital energy that infuses rank-and-file Hasidic lives.

The words of the rebbes are understood in the vein of “the *shekhinah* would speak from the throat of Moses,”⁴⁸⁸ an articulation which incidentally makes explicit how the *maymer*, like the Midrash, is supposed to ventriloquize the Voice of Authority. The delivery of a discourse by a rebbe is considered a Sinaitic revelation, for which the rebbe is a mere conduit.⁴⁸⁹ Granted that each rebbe “prophesies in his own style” (see b*Sanhedrin*, 89a); still, the words once articulated are endowed with the creative power of the “letters of the Torah” as described by R. Schneur Zalman.⁴⁹⁰ These attitudes (anchored as they are in the Talmudic dicta referred to above) motivate, are exemplified in, and are in turn shaped by, ideas about language like those expressed in *Bosi legani*.

The *Bosi legani* complex of discourses as a whole, as exemplified by the selections we have explored in this and the previous chapter, thematizes the dynamic of bestowal from *mashpi'a* (benefactor) to *meqabel* (recipient) in its very structure, which we elaborated at length earlier. The thought of Rayyats, the bestower, is transmitted in the discourse of 5710 (1950), while the discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977) are the “area of the recipient (*shetah ha-meqabel*)” (5717, sec. IV, et passim), i.e. that of the Rebbe. The Rebbe unquestioningly receives the words of the Previous Rebbe, as well as those of all the preceding rebbes cited within the discourses, manifesting unqualified *bittul*. Yet in the same move, the Rebbe is developing and articulating the concepts alluded to in the kernel of Rayyats's thought. In the passage cited from the 5737 (1977) discourse above, the Rebbe not only articulates the unstated premises of his father-in-law, but also challenges them and thereby expands them, introducing and enriching the notion of the “light that surmounts all [the letters],” demonstrating the prolific potential of *bittul*.

More specifically, the discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977) can each be found to thematize their respective themes. When considering the two cycles of elaboration on *Bosi legani* by the Rebbe in general, we can notice a shift in style between the two. The overall trend in the first cycle is to comment on the relevant chapter of 5710 (1950) assiduously and methodically, treating each segment of the chapter. In the second cycle, by contrast, the trend is to discuss a

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Ch Intertextuality, “The Golden Chain.”

⁴⁸⁸ See Tanya, ch. 34; *iggeret ha-qodesh*, 25; *liqutney sihot*, vol. 4, 1087 fn5. Reb Hillel and his disagreement with the Tsemah Tsedeq (sichat 25 elul, 5734). Chapter on Intertextuality, “Within Each and Every One,” for more discussion. Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 34, regarding the Maggid.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Ch Background, “The Maymer.”

⁴⁹⁰ *Sha'ar ha-yihud we-ha'emunah*, ch. 1.

topic not directly treated within the 5710 (1950) discourse, but to use (a portion of) its theme associatively to illuminate an ostensibly separate matter.

Interestingly, while there remains room to speculate on the significance of this shift in the discourses of the second cycle, the Rebbe himself made some comments within the *Bosi legani* corpus that may shed some light on his own thoughts on the matter.⁴⁹¹ One reflection on this issue can be inferred from an instance when the Rebbe referred to the study of a given chapter of *Bosi legani* for the second time around, and applied the biblical expression “double wisdom (*kiflayim le-tushiyah*).” In a footnote reference is made to the source of this phrase in Job, 11:6: ‘And He would have told you the mysteries of wisdom, for wisdom is double.’ The note also sends us to the Midrash (Ex. Rabbah, 46:1): “The Holy One said to Moses: Do not grieve over the first tablets, for they contained only the ten commandments alone; while in the second tablets I am including for you laws (*halakhot*), exposition (*midrash*), and narratives (*aggadot*). Thus it is written, ‘And He told you the mysteries of wisdom, for wisdom is double.’”⁴⁹² The allusion can be interpreted to mean that the second cycle is not a mere repetition of the first, but adds to and expands on the discourse manifold.

A second allusion to the distinction between the first and second cycles can be identified in a comment of the Rebbe’s in his discourse on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Rayyats’s passing (and the conclusion of the first cycle of *Bosi legani*) in 5730 (1970):

After twenty years... the concept of [the right] “to sell the properties of one’s father” (*bBava batra*, 156a) is accrued as well. (This refers to the students of the *tsadik* as well, for they are called children.) In *Liqqutze Torah* it is explained that when our sages say that “[one may not] sell the properties of one’s father until they are twenty years old,” this is because it is at that time that the *maqqufê abba* (transcendent aspects of the Sefirah of *hokhmah*) enter one. These are transcendent elements, which are beyond engarment in vessels... After twenty years one can receive, in addition to the *tsadik*’s soul-level of *ḥayah*, also his *yehidah*.⁴⁹³

While this paragraph deserves parsing in its own right, including for its creative, Kabbalistic interpretation of a Talmudic, legal phraseology, it is clear that the Rebbe considered the passing of the twentieth year milestone to be an entrance into a new, more mature stage as a child/disciple of Rayyats, one which entitled him to not only hold in trust that which was bequeathed to him, but to engage in commerce with his inheritance, with an eye toward expanding the family fortunes. It is a moment when the recipient comes into their own as (in some ways) becoming fully identified with the bequeather.⁴⁹⁴

This conception of the significance of the twentieth *yortsayt* (anniversary) is reinforced later in the same discourse. The Rebbe refers to a talk by Rayyats from 13 Tishre, 5705 (September 29, 1944), where he related the following:

On Rosh Hashanah, 5663 (1902), my illustrious father (Rashab) recited a discourse on the topic of “essential life” (*ḥay be-‘ešem*) and “vitalizing life” (*ḥay le-ḥaḥayot*)... Later, when sitting with us in the *sukkah*, my teacher Rashbats (R. Shmuel Betsalel Sheftl,

⁴⁹¹ See B.L. vol. II, 712, s.v. *Limmudo pereq le-shanah*. See also *Torat menaḥem – hitva’aduyot – 5746*, 164, regarding the gradual development of each rebbe’s “personal touch.”

⁴⁹² B.L. vol II, 613, fn24.

⁴⁹³ B.L. vol. II, 652-3. For *ḥayah* and *yehidah*, see 5737, sec. XIII and endnotes.

⁴⁹⁴ See *Liqqutze Sikhot*, vol. XXXV, 50 and references regarding the concept that “the heir is literally in the place of the bequeather (יורש במקום המוריש ממש).”

c1833-1905) said to my saintly father, “[Rights are granted] to sell one’s father’s possessions once one is twenty years old.” When Rashbats said this, my father’s features changed, but he did not respond.

When my teacher Rashbats later left the *sukkah*, I asked [him] what he had meant thereby. He responded, “What do you not understand? It is now twenty years since the *histalkes* (passing) of your grandfather, the saintly Maharash!”

...It was I that made the connection between all these matters.⁴⁹⁵

Rayyats understood that the content of his father’s discourse on Rosh Hashanah had prompted his teacher’s remark indicating that he had reached a new phase in his tenure as rebbe. In his discourse of 5730 (1970), the Rebbe notes that on the twentieth anniversary of the passing of Rashab (2 Nissan, 5700 (April 10, 1940)), Rayyats’s discourse expounded on the same theme. The Rebbe cites this discourse in his *Bosi legani* of year twenty. It is evident that expounding on the topic of “essential life” and “vitalizing life” represents a rite of passage for a Ḥabad rebbe, indicating his graduation to a more mature state of rebbe-hood. The shift in the style of the Rebbe’s discourses on *Bosi legani* in the second cycle might likewise be an expression of this change in status.

The discourses on the seventh chapter exhibit this same distinction. The 5717 (1957) discourse is punctuated throughout with such transitional phrases as “my father-in-law continues,” and a discussion of the subsequent segment of Chapter Seven. The discourse of 5737 (1977), by contrast, summarizes the thoughts of Chapter Seven in the first several sections, and then turns to an expatiation on a broader theme of the phenomenon of *panim* (internality, anteriority) and *aḥor* (externality, posteriority) within the individual and throughout the cosmos. In this way each discourse can be seen as also thematizing its own insight on the power of the letters. The discourse of 5717 (1957) represents an unveiling of the light and meaning within each individual “letter” or thought-kernel of Rayyats’s discussion; 5737 (1977) shifts the focus a step further, to the “light that surmounts them all,” insight that is at once beyond Rayyats’s topic and generated by it.

In the previous chapter we considered the overall insights of the respective discourses of 5717 (1957) and of 5737 (1977), focusing as they do on the dual phraseologies of “‘*az irat garmah* (her self was diminished)” and “*let lah mi-garmah klum* (she has nothing of her own at all).” On the Rebbe’s read, the first locution, the focus of 5717 (1957), describes the self-diminishment of the bestower in order to engage in bestowal, while the second term, the basis for 5737 (1977), implies that the recipient’s absolute self-abnegation (exceeding self-diminishment) in which “she has nothing... at all,” creates the necessary conditions to cultivate great potential that is not “her own” but is received from above. The thematization of this content embodied in these discourses was discussed, in reference to the moment of the *maymer*’s delivery, as well as to the Rebbe’s orientation of repeating, elucidating, and (in 5737 (1977)) expanding on the words of his predecessors. A Ḥabad discussion of *hamshakhah* (drawing down) from *mashpi’a* (benefactor) to *meqabel* (recipient) within the discourse is itself that very occurrence: it is the drawing down and transmitting of the “words of the living G-d” from the upper realms, mediated by the rebbe, to the Hasidim, thereby edifying them and endowing them with additional spiritual

⁴⁹⁵ *Sefer ha-siḥot* – 5705, 4th ed. (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1986), 23-24.

energies. At this point, let us concentrate our attention on how each discourse thematizes its treatment of Chapter Seven in Rayyats's *Bosi legani* in the context of their positions within their respective twenty-year cycles.

5717 (1957) focuses on the process of *hashpa'ah* (bestowal) as the bestowed matter is transmitted from *mashpi'a* to *meqabel*. This is hypostatized as the three *yods* of "the recipient's submission... the benefactor's submission... [and] the third aspect of the *yod*... which joins benefactor and recipient."⁴⁹⁶ The discourse emphasizes that true reception and possession can only occur when the recipient adopts a posture of *biṭṭul*. The discourse of 5717 (1957) exemplifies this dynamic, enacting a stance of repetition and citation of Rayyats's discourse, with the Rebbe merely elucidating and elaborating the *Friyerdiker Rebbe*'s thoughts; this too is primarily through the teachings of his predecessors, not (avowedly) his own words. The Rebbe's own role is downplayed ("her self was diminished"), while bringing together the profundity of the previous six/eight generations ("I have all (*kol*)").⁴⁹⁷

In 5737, the central theme is a step beyond *biṭṭul* in the narrow sense of self-abnegation and submission. In this discourse, the Rebbe challenges the idea that the recipient is only a subject of submission, and he does so drawing on Rayyats's own words. He asks, what is "the reason that it is imperative that the *yod* (of the Sefirah of *yesod* etc.) be drawn down into the *dalet* (of the Sefirah of *malkhut*), [when] there must be absolute self-abnegation [on the part of the recipient]?" The recipient, in incorporating the "*yod* of *yesod*" within itself (embodied by the smidgen at the rear of the *dalet*), rather than exhibiting absolute emptiness (as is attributed to the letter *resh*, and which is colored negatively), would seem to have lost the *biṭṭul* which defines it. The Rebbe's resolution of this problem transforms the notion of *meqabel* fundamentally. He asserts that the presence of value or "light" within the recipient is not in conflict with "having nothing" and poverty, since "the notion of *biṭṭul* (on its own, is not the desired end; rather it) is a precursor to the disclosure that follows it"⁴⁹⁸ The *meqabel*'s story only begins with their self-abnegation; the real plot revolves around what the *meqabel* achieves with the bestowal they successfully absorb from the *mashpi'a*. We see the heir moving from self-effacing recipient, who preserves the estate on behalf of the bequeather, to agent and professed innovator.

The explicit discourse of *biṭṭul* that is the subject of the thought of the Rebbe and of Rayyats in its enactment in the Rebbe's avowed positioning within the discourse as well as in the event of the discourse's transmission, represents an additional dimension of *biṭṭul* not stated in the discourses but implied by the entirety of the Ḥabad project, namely the effacing of the distinction between the text and its context.

The Letters as Sephirot

Elliot Wolfson has noted that when trying to write a biography of the Rebbe, the problem is not simply accurately distinguishing between "fact" and hagiography, because the hagiographical elements of the Rebbe's own life and of the history of Ḥabad influence the Ḥabad perception of reality.

It does not seem tenable to sever the realistic from the fictional in a clear-cut way, as the latter engenders the former... It is not apparent to me that any methodology can presume

⁴⁹⁶ 5717, V.

⁴⁹⁷ See Ch Insert *Bittul*.

⁴⁹⁸ 5737, IV.

to divest the Rebbe of his garb as rebbe... The imaginative flourishes are no less vital to understanding identity construction than are the data retrievable through rational and quantitative means of exploration.⁴⁹⁹

Attempts to penetrate through the shroud of hagiography are futile, if it is presumed that one can remove that shroud entirely to observe some naked historical truth. The only truth that may be observed is truth garbed in the appearance of truth.⁵⁰⁰

In a similar vein, Glen Dynner concludes regarding the early Hasidic masters that, *pace* the maskilic claim that they were “charlatans” who deceived and extorted their Hasidim, the truth was more likely that the *tsadikim* of the period he treats sincerely believed in their powers as rebbes and intermediaries on behalf of their people. “[The Polish zaddikim] seem... to have sold magical services that they believed they could really render”⁵⁰¹ Even from their private conversations it is evident that the *tsadikim* “shared in the widespread magical beliefs.”⁵⁰²

The insights of both these scholars acknowledge that the inner world of Hasidism, which in Ḥabad is conveyed in significant measure through the medium of the discourses, produces Hasidic life and social realities as much as it is produced by them. It follows, therefore, that the more thorough and comprehensive our understanding of the philosophies of Ḥabad, the more accurate will our grasp of its culture be. Soundbites and slogans can be misleading without their being situated in the context of the broader spiritual universe within which they are embedded. Thus, to paraphrase Boyarin’s words regarding Midrash in the context of Ḥabad thought, any model of Ḥabad culture that divorces one way of making meaning from another is inadequate. The *maymer* (discourse) is the matrix within which both the Torah as well as life is illuminated and their meaning made.

To further develop this notion, let us turn to examine another important aspect of the Ḥabad theory of letters: their association with the Sefirot. As cited above from the Rebbe, the letter *yod* in the current discussion is associated with the Sefirah of *yesod*, while the letter *dalet* with the Sefirah *malkhut*. The presence of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* indicates the conjoining of *yesod* and *malkhut*, which serves to “unite heaven and earth,” bestower and recipient. How is the significance of the letters as dynamic and as conduits of energy given further texture by their association with the divine Sefirot?

The Sefirotic realm is characterized not only by dynamism, but may be best understood as a network, akin to the living body. There is a reciprocity in this system, the absence or diminishment of which poses a threat to the health of the entire system. (Those letters that represent a healthy relationship between Sefirot are considered good or holy letters, while those that typify a flawed intercourse are “letters that are seen on the evil side.”⁵⁰³) Letters and language are means of communication, both in the verbal sense as well as in the sense of conveyance. Divine energy is bestowed to the worlds via the Sefirotic system of interlinking levels, which is embodied in language and letters. The capacity of language to contain meaning

⁴⁹⁹ Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 13.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 15; cf. Ch Language, “Self-Effacement and the Bridging of Worlds” in reference to Boyarin’s insight on the martyrdom of R. Akiva.

⁵⁰¹ Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 194.

⁵⁰² Ibid, 173.

⁵⁰³ see *Bosi le-ganni* – 5710, ch. 6 (14-16) and 8 (17-20); 5716 (192-203), 5718 (268-88), 5736 (204-24), 5738 (289-96).

and to transmit it is the verbal representation of the simultaneous communication of the dynamic force of the words from a bestower to a recipient. The aspect of reciprocity suggests that communication is not merely potent, but imperative and vital.

The theory of the letters that emerges from the discourses may be summed up as follows: Every verbal communication is a moment of bestowal, and every bestowal takes place via language. Based on the Talmud's interpretation "*gimmel dalet, gemol dalim* (*gimmel* and *dalet* – give to the destitute)" (b*Shabbat*, 104a), the letter *gimmel* is understood as actually giving to the *dalet*,⁵⁰⁴ and likewise other letters are seen as literally interacting with one another. The *gimmel* is a *mashpi'a*, literally a communicator of influence (*shefa'*),⁵⁰⁵ while the *dalet* is a *meqabel* (recipient). The *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* represents the capacity of the *dalet* to receive (*B.L.* ch. 6) and the capacity of the giver to bestow. The result of this bestowal is the formation of the *hê* (configured as *dalet* with a *yod* inside it). When this communication is interrupted, represented by the lack of a *yod* at the rear of the letter *resh*, a malevolent state of silence results:

However... the letter *resh* lacks the... unifying Sefirah of *yesod*. Speech, too, is present in a state of utmost concealment and obscurity. Thus it is written 'I have been mute, still, I have remained silent etc.' (Psalms, 39:3). Even speech is present in a state of utmost concealment, since the light and energy that enlivens the *siṭra aḥara* ("other side") is a radiation of a radiation, the externality of the externality, and is present in a state of utmost concealment. (5710)

Instead of the Sefirah of *malkhut*, the realm of speech, performing its function of articulation, it is silenced "as a ewe before her shearers," it is "concealed."⁵⁰⁶ As a result, the interaction between the Sephiroth of *yesod* and *malkhut* fails to result in a properly formed letter *hê*; rather, as elaborated in the discourse of 5717 (1957), there develops a state of *niddah* (wanderer)⁵⁰⁷ and *nad hê* (the *hê* has wandered).⁵⁰⁸

Given the Talmudic interpretation of the letters *gimmel* and *dalet* cited above, it is noteworthy that the analogy given in our discourses for bestowal is not that of an interaction between wealthy and poor individuals, but between teacher and disciple, a moment of verbal communication.⁵⁰⁹ The exercise of a teacher speaking words to a disciple by which the teacher communicates ideas is not merely a representation of bestowal (the letters and words signifying other, distinct signifieds), but is itself *hashpa'ah* (bestowal). The disciple's readiness to receive, in turn, allows the bestowal to be consummated, and results in a healthy communicative process.

In this manner, the theory of the letters that undergirds the discourses provides hermeneutic keys not only for the decoding of the discourses themselves, but indeed of the *sitz im leben* of their delivery as well. The communication of the *maymer* is a moment of *hashpa'ah*, where the master (the rebbe) communicates dynamic energy to his disciples (the Hasidim) through the words of the discourse. Subsequent review and study of the discourses, both orally

⁵⁰⁴ See *B.L.*, "5718," 269 ff.

⁵⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, that the *gimmel* is composed of a *yod* atop a *waw*, and another *yod* below. This correlates with the 5717 discourse's theory of the three *yods*.

⁵⁰⁶ See 5717, sec. VI.

⁵⁰⁷ On the connotation of *niddah* as menstruant, and the larger implications of this teaching, see below in this chapter.

⁵⁰⁸ See sec. VI.

⁵⁰⁹ See *B.L.* "5718," 269 ff. and 279 ff. regarding the interpretation of the concept and letters of *tsedaqah*. See also *ibid.*, "5719," 316, where teaching is contrasted with *hashpa'ah gashmit* (physical conferral, touching on the sexual connotations of the relationship between *yesod* and *malkhut*).

and in writing, possesses the potency to recreate and revitalize the event of *hashpa'ah*, continuing to infuse the Hasid with the discourses' enabling vitality.⁵¹⁰

But the theory of the letters and words of the Torah and their associations with the realm of the divine Sephirot does not only illuminate the significance of the event of the delivery of a discourse in Hasidic life. We have already elaborated at some length on the correlation between the Sephirotic network and the "golden chain" of the Ḥabad masters.⁵¹¹ Let us return to the relationship between the Sephirot of *yesod* and *malkhut*, corresponding to Rayyats and the Rebbe, these Sephirot being discussed in our discourses in the context of the shape of the letter *dalet*.

The *dalet*, as we have seen, represents a robust relationship between *mashpi'a* (giver) and *meqabel* (receiver). Let us summarize the various elements of the complex letter that is *dalet*: its name is associated with *dal* (destitute) and *de-let* (not), as in the phrase "*de-let lah mi-garmah klum* (that has not of its own anything at all)," the picture of poverty; it also contains a *yod* at its rear, signifying a) the empty *dalet*'s readiness to receive; b) the *mashpi'a*'s preparedness to give; and c) it represents the bestowal itself, at the nexus of *mashpi'a* and *meqabel*. *Dalet* possesses the possibility of full realization (as a *hê*) from the outset. Furthermore, its relationship with the *mashpi'a*, the one that will empower it to become fulfilled, is built into its identity.

As we have seen above, in 5737 (1977) the Rebbe emphasizes that the phrase "*(de-)let lah mi-garmah klum*" does not stand in conflict with the bestowal the *dalet* possesses in the form of the *yod*, because the *dalet*'s poverty is only regarding that which is "its own." "On account of... her [stance of] *biṭṭul* toward the *yod*... she has everything" (5737, IV). From this it follows that the *dalet*'s state of impoverishment is only an initial state, that must eventually develop into a potent restorative force within the cosmos, a "precursor to the disclosure that follows it" (ibid).

The framework elaborated here can be seen as constituting a statement regarding the Rebbe's own position. He "has nothing of his own"; as we will elaborate below, the Rebbe professedly attributed all rebbe-hood to his father-in-law.⁵¹² But what he does have is the requisite *biṭṭul* towards Rayyats, and the desire on Rayyats's part to grant him empowerment from the upper realms to which Rayyats himself has access. As such, the Rebbe has the ability to accomplish even that which his predecessors did not. It is as the consummate *meqabel* that the Rebbe is most creative and innovative.⁵¹³ Nevertheless, in the 5717 (1957) discourse, in which the Rebbe primarily discusses the orientation of the giver, his contribution consists of elucidating the words of Rayyats in Chapter Seven, and the Rebbe's own innovation is muted. Only once he is empowered to "sell his father's properties" in the second twenty-year cycle, does the Rebbe both discuss and enact the possibility of creativity on the part of the *meqabel*, expanding point-like meditations into new directions.

It is significant in this context that the particular dynamic of the relationship between *yesod* and *malkhut* is one in which *yesod* draws from the Sephirot above it to bequeath to *malkhut*: "[it] unites heaven and earth... [the upper Sephirot] with *malkhut*" (5717, V). *Malkhut* receives through *yesod* an effluence that originates in the first Sephirah of *hokhmah*, the Sephirah associated with R. Schneur Zalman. This phenomenon is thematized in the format of *Bosi legani*,

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Ch Background, "Conclusion."

⁵¹¹ See Ch Insert, "Textual Themes and Contextual Thematization."

⁵¹² Mayse, 15, on ayin of *tsaddiq*; connection?

⁵¹³ Compare with the perspective of Yoel Kahan, observing R. Menachem Mendel's transition into the role of rebbe, that "all [matters] of the [late] Rebbe pass through him" (17 Tammuz, 5710).

in which it is discovered that the bestowal of Rayyats, the teaching transmitted from master to disciple, contains in it the wisdom of all preceding rebbes as well.

Thus the notion of *biṭṭul*, the self-effacement that is at the center of the relationship between giver and recipient, *gimmel/yod* and *dalet*, between the Sephirot of *yesod* and *malkhut*, as expounded in the seventh chapter of Rayyats's *Bosi legani* – 5710 (1950) and elucidated by the Rebbe in his discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977), can now be seen to have proverbially jumped off the page and asserted itself as a very tangible dynamic that illuminates the process and significance of the discourse as artifact, its delivery and preservation. *Biṭṭul* is not only a theoretical concept, but is a description of how a rebbe conveys a teaching and how a Hasid receives it, and how one rebbe's spiritual bequeathal is absorbed and developed by another rebbe. In the Ḥabad discourse, then, the texts thematize and enact the dual function of the text as conveyer of content as well as participant in a dynamic phenomenon.⁵¹⁴ The flow of influence between rebbe and Hasidim as well as between the rebbes themselves produces the texts even as it is produced by the texts. The reality of bestowal is itself textual, dissolving the distinction between the metaphoric “vehicle” and “tenor” in the relationship between text and culture. This dissolution of distinctions is a radical expression of the midrashic aim to perpetuate the Voice of Authority.

Der Rebbe Hot Alts Bavorent

We have already encountered the Rebbe's view that in the *hemshekh* of *Bosi legani* Rayyats had “anticipated everything (*hot er alts bavorent*) and alluded to everything,” establishing its oracular quality as a source of guidance for Rayyats's followers going forward.⁵¹⁵ I also posited that R. Menachem Mendel may have seen the set of discourses delivered by his father-in-law during the festivities of the former's wedding, the *Drushey khasene*, as a kind of personal lodestar. It is even possible that R. Menachem Mendel's decision to accept the leadership of Ḥabad was influenced by allusions that he found in either or both of these collections. We can certainly correlate certain momentous developments over the course of the Rebbe's tenure with ideas found in *Bosi legani*. In what follows I will supply several examples, which will provide a degree of substantiation to the notion that the discourse is understood not only as a statement of a philosophy, but as a dynamic entity that vitalizes and empowers.

Becoming Rebbe

The most significant undertaking of R. Menachem Mendel's tenure was, of course, his acceptance of the role of rebbe. That he would do so was by no means self-evident in the immediate aftermath of Rayyats's passing. For a full year following his father-in-law's demise, until the first *yortsayt*, R. Menachem Mendel refused to take on the title offering a number of justifications, such as that he was not fit for the job, that he had no instructions from Rayyats in this regard, and that he was obligated to fulfill the responsibilities already entrusted to him by the *Friyerdiker Rebbe*. There were a number of other considerations as well that were not mentioned

⁵¹⁴ See *B.L.*, vol. II, 560 ff., where the Rebbe elaborates on the correlation of the Besht and the Maggid to the Sephirotic levels of *'atiq yomin* and *'arikh anpin* respectively, and how this is reflected in two characteristic teachings of theirs.

⁵¹⁵ Ch Intertextuality, “Sources of Authority.”

outright but that must also have posed a substantial reason for pause on this matter, such as the sensitivities of R. Menachem Mendel's older brother-in-law R. Shemaryahu Gourarie (Rashag) who was also considered a contender for the position, and how this might impact the relationship of R. Menachem Mendel's wife Haya Mushka with Rashag's wife Chana Gourarie, her only surviving sister.⁵¹⁶

Ultimately R. Menachem Mendel did take the mantle of rebbehood upon himself, although he did say in a distinctive and in some ways unusual fashion. What it was that finally convinced him that this was the correct move is a subject of speculation, as well as something that the Rebbe himself referred to on rare occasions. One such occasion was in conversation with Reform rabbi and writer Herbert Weiner, when the Rebbe reflected, "it is always pleasant to run away from responsibility. But what if the running might destroy the congregation, and suppose... they put the key into your pocket and walk away?"⁵¹⁷ The suggestion, then, is that R. Menachem Mendel felt that he had no choice, that he had a responsibility to his father-in-law's community. In a similar vein R. Menachem Mendel once referred to himself at a *farbrengen* as "an individual who has been 'made a servant to this people' (cf. I Kings, 12:7), whose function it is to organize" the activities of the Hasidim who serve as Rayyats's "hands and feet" to "implement the dissemination of his teachings" and bring them to fruition since the sixth rebbe is "in the world of truth" and cannot do this himself. "Thus, who [this individual, i.e. R. Menachem Mendel] is, is irrelevant; what is relevant is the role of continuing the activities and efforts of" the *Friyerdiker Rebbe*.⁵¹⁸ Clearly, R. Menachem Mendel felt that without his organizational skills and efforts from the position of rebbe, there was a danger that Rayyats's activities and vision for the Habad movement would fail to be realized.

One may question if other motives may have also played a role, as some have done; however, speculating about one's unexpressed intentions puts us on very shaky ground.⁵¹⁹ I prefer to speculate further, but in light of some of R. Menachem Mendel's explicit statements. As noted previously, we do know that he saw the *hemshekh Bosi legani* as a source of authority and guidance for the movement as a whole as well as for individual Hasidim. He further verbalized his approach of personally seeking answers in it for the questions people posed to him regarding their personal quandaries. It is not too much of a leap beyond this to imagine that R. Menachem Mendel meditated on the allusions in these discourses to resolve the question that burned in his own life, namely whether or not he was meant to succeed Rayyats despite his reservations. I will develop what these allusions might have been in part by expanding on my contention made in an earlier chapter that it is conceivable that R. Menachem Mendel viewed the discourses delivered at his wedding as a personal guiding light where Rayyats *hot alts bavorent* for him personally.

One possible allusion noted by the Hasidim, which may have been compelling to R. Menachem Mendel as well, is to be found in the reference to the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash cited at the beginning of Rayyats's discourse. As noted, this Midrash is found in several locations in the Midrashic corpus; in *Bosi legani – 5710* (1950) the reference is given as "*bimqomo* (ad loc)," i.e. the Midrash Rabbah on the verse in Song of Songs. While there are different attributions in other sources, in the Midrash on the verse 'I have come to my garden' the teaching is attributed to "R.

⁵¹⁶ See Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe, ??*. Diaries of the period at www.mafteiach.app (accessed October 31, 2021).

⁵¹⁷ Herbert Weiner, *Nine and a Half Mystics: The Kabbala Today*, 175.

⁵¹⁸ Schneerson, *Hitvaaduyot – 5745*, vol. III, 1695.

⁵¹⁹ See Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe, ??*; Avrum Ehrlich, *Leadership in the Habad Movement, ???*; *Yomanim* www.mafteiach.app (accessed November 2, 2021).

Menaḥem, son-in-law of R. 'El'azar bar 'Abuna.” This was taken as alluding to “Rabbi Menachem,” son-in-law of Rayyats.⁵²⁰ It is possible that R. Menachem Mendel took this suggestion into account himself.

It seems to me, however, that such a vague intimation is insufficient on its own. What may be more compelling is the way Rayyats's final discourse calls back pivotal moments in his relationship with R. Menachem Mendel. For one thing, the *Bosi le-ganni* discourses were originally orated in 5683 (1923), the same year that R. Menachem Mendel first visited the court of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.⁵²¹ While he was a relative of the sixth rebbe, a descendant of the *Tsemakh Tsedek* like him, and the son of a devoted Hasid of Rashab, R. Menachem Mendel himself had never visited the court of the rebbes until he was twenty years old. When exactly he visited and the duration of his stay is not entirely clear; it is conceivable that he was present at the delivery of these discourses.⁵²² If so, their publication as Rayyats's parting testament might have indicated to R. Menachem Mendel that he had a personal role to play in the future of the movement. What are more certain are the links between *Bosi legani* and the wedding discourses.⁵²³

In these discourses several important concepts are shared with the *Bosi legani* discourses, including the *Bati le-ganni* Midrash, and the highlighting of the importance of the seventh.⁵²⁴ It is evident from his own treatment of *Bosi legani* in his inaugural discourse that the Rebbe saw these notions as pivotal to Rayyats's guiding message for the period after his passing; that they are already found in the discourses of his own wedding may well have suggested that he was to bring them to fulfillment in the “seventh generation.” We have already discussed some of the nuances in how the Rebbe understood the significance of the “seventh,” and the sense of *biṭṭul* he ascribed to it. Let us now only briefly indicate several possible consequences of this (speculated) understanding of R. Menachem Mendel's of his personal direction contained in *Bosi legani*.

One of the noteworthy aspects of the Rebbe's claim to rebbehood is that, unlike many other rebbes both within Ḥabad and without, R. Menachem Mendel did not invoke his lineage to substantiate his worthiness of the position. Rather, he pinned it on his status as a son-in-law. Furthermore, even as such, the Rebbe continued to profess that Ḥabad continued to be lead by Rayyats, who remained the *naśsi hador* (noble leader of the generation), as we have seen above. While this can be parsed on sociological and psychological levels, my contention that these attitudes are also part of a midrashizing engagement with *Bosi legani*. “R. Menachem the son-in-law” becomes rebbe as son-in-law, impelled by the discourses of his nuptials when he attained such status. He is “seventh” in the line from the “first,” having no particular worthiness of his own other than that he succeeds his predecessor, and therefore ascribes the true authority to his father-in-law. Perhaps this emphasis on being the son-in-law is related to the phenomenon of delivering discourses being almost entirely discontinued shortly after the death of the Rebbe's wife.

⁵²⁰ See *Bati le-ganni le-orekh ha-shanim: sekirah meyuhedet al ma'amare “bati le-ganni.”* It is difficult to ascertain when this allusion began to circulate. See a possible reference to it in *Sefer ha-sihot – 5752*, vol. II, 400 fn??.

⁵²¹ Ch Intertextuality, “Effacement of Boundaries.”

⁵²² See *The Early Years* for the known dates of R. Menachem Mendel's visits, which do not coincide with these discourses; it is still possible that he was present but that there is no record of it. See Heilmann and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, ?? on his late arrival in the court of Lubavitch.

⁵²³ See *B.L.*, vol. I, vi, fn35 and vii, fn45.

⁵²⁴ Midrash – in *Derushe hatumah*, 9-10; see for the seventh *ibid*, 23 and 43-44.

The Era of the Feminine

A prominent aspect of the Rebbe's leadership was his emphasis on "the Jewish woman" and the ways that he made himself accessible to, and gave unique attention to and encouragement for the activities of, his female followers.⁵²⁵ Indeed, a shift in orientation toward women in Ḥabad had already begun under Rayyats, who while yet in Eastern Europe had already begun establishing circles for the teaching of Ḥabad literature and ethos to young women, and whose talks and publications began raising the profile of the Hasidic woman.⁵²⁶ Nevertheless, as Ada Rapoport-Albert point out, R. Menachem Mendel revolutionized the place of women in Ḥabad both theoretically and organizationally to levels that had not obtained under Rayyats.⁵²⁷ The Rebbe accepted women into private audience (*yekhides*) with him, established and promoted Ḥabad women's organizations and publications, devoted select gatherings exclusively to them, while also hosting a female audience (in the ladies' gallery) at his regular *farbrengens* as well. Beyond all this, he encouraged the wives of his *shlukhim* (emissaries) who opened Ḥabad centers in all manner of far-flung Jewish communities to not only support their husbands, to become equal partners in the work of drawing Jews closer to the Torah. As such, the Rebbe dubbed these women *shlukhos*, female emissaries, rather than "wives of *shlukhim*" or the like.

Much has already been written on the Rebbe's attitude toward women in Judaism and in Ḥabad, on its contours and limitations, its radicalism and conservatism, and here is not the place to expand this discussion. What I do wish to contribute here is the premise that this innovative approach also partakes in the dynamic of midrashization just as does R. Menachem Mendel's view of his own status. Indeed, the final missive of Rayyats opens with "I have come to my garden, my sister, the bride," bringing the feminine into view, with the successive discourse continuing this trend, opening with "You who sits in the gardens, friends listen to your voice" (Song, 8:13), once again addressing the feminine. The first two discourses of his *hemshekh* Rayyats dedicated to the commemoration of the *yohrtsayts* of his grandmother and his mother, respectively. (In a 1992 talk captioned "regarding the elevated status of the wives and daughters of Israel, may they live, in this generation of ours," the Rebbe makes this connection explicit.⁵²⁸) In the discourses of 5717 (1957) and 5737 (1977) in particular, the subject centers on the position of the *meqabel*, gendered as feminine, illustrating its ideal state and its empowerment. In a moment we will point to some related elements that emerge from this focus on the feminine, but we can already discern a basis for an emphasis of the female sphere characterizing the new generation of Ḥabad.

One of the topics raised in Rayyats's *Bosi legani* is that of "holy folly (*shtus dikdushe*)," which is the antidote to "folly of the opposite side," and which is effective in drawing the Primary *Shekhinah* below.⁵²⁹ In this connection he cites a Talmudic precedent where R. Shemu'el b. R. Yiṣḥaq is described as "dancing [at weddings] with three [branches of myrtle]... Said R. Zeyra 'The old man embarrasses us'... When he died, a pillar of fire separated between

⁵²⁵ Wodzinski (also in Biale) on the status of women in Hasidism. Rapoport-Albert, "From Woman as Hasid to Woman as 'Tsadik' in the Teachings of the Last Two Lubavitcher Rebbes." Loewenthal, "Daughter/Wife of Hasid, or Hasidic Woman?" Wolfson chapter in *Open Secret*.

⁵²⁶ Loewenthal, "Letter to Riga". S.B. Levine, *Toledot Habad be-Polin, Lita, ve-Latvia*.

⁵²⁷ Rapoport-Albert, "From Woman as Hasid," 462 ff.

⁵²⁸ *Sefer ha-sihot* – 5752, vol. I, 300.

⁵²⁹ Ch Insert, "Summaries of *Bosi Legani*."

him and everyone else etc. Said R. Zeyra... ‘the folly [of the old man benefitted him].’⁵³⁰ This passage illustrates a kind of folly that is positive and holy, achieving the presence of a “pillar of fire,” symbolizing the *Shekhinah*.⁵³¹ In commenting on this passage in his discourse of 5715 (1955) the Rebbe discusses the significance of this folly occurring in connection with a wedding, the occasion of a marriage being, in Rayyats’s words, “a level that is exceedingly lofty and wondrous.” In the course of his discussion the Rebbe invokes the teaching of R. Dov Ber, the *Mitteler Rebbe*, that the level of divinity manifest within marriage is “that which is primordial to the systematic order of *hishtallshelut*.”

It is on account of this that the joy of a marriage is... as the wedding blessings conclude, “Who causes the bridegroom to rejoice *with* the bride,” for the primary joy emanates from the bride etc. and from the bride it reaches the bridegroom. This is akin to the future time-to-come, when ‘a female shall encircle a man’ (Jer. 31:22). (Analogously, during the wedding celebration the bride encircles the bridegroom beneath the canopy) ... Not only are bridegroom and bride of equal stature (the “voice of the bridegroom” and “the voice of the bride” are equal), but moreover, the bride surpasses the bridegroom, such that joy is drawn from her to the bridegroom, and he is the *meqabel*... (*B.L.*, vol. I, 156)

This commentary points toward the future elevation of the feminine to the level of *mashpi’a* in the eschaton, a concept that motivated the Rebbe’s innovative approach to the role of women.⁵³² Interestingly, this Talmudic passage represents another intersection between *Bosi legani* and the wedding discourses.⁵³³ Thus both the wedding discourses and those of *Bosi legani* might suggest an orientation of elevation of the feminine.

It is indeed the case that Rayyats embarked on the quest to reimagine the role of women in Hasidism, and that R. Menachem Mendel may be seen as simply continuing along the path charted out by his predecessor. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the notion of having entered the era of the feminine carried particular significance for R. Menachem Mendel. In the passage just quoted, the Rebbe refers to the state in which the bridegroom is the *meqabel*, receiving from the bride. It seems justified to me to suggest that the Rebbe personally saw his relationship with his own wife, the daughter of his rebbe, in just this way, at least in certain significant ways. He was the recipient from his father-in-law (as discussed at length previously) through his wife, and perhaps in some ways he was a recipient from her in her own right. In this way, the *yesod-malkhut* relationship that he enjoyed with his father-in-law was not only as master-disciple, but entered into the realm of its sexual connotations in a much more concrete way through the marriage connection.

We should be careful not to misconstrue this suggestion in any ways that depart from the norms of *halakhah* and traditional Jewish practice; nevertheless, as we have already seen from the quotation from *Tanya* in a previous chapter,⁵³⁴ the language surrounding the subject of *yesod* and especially the relationship of Hasid and rebbe is couched in terms that connote an intimacy well beyond the transmission of information. This is evident from, among other concepts, the notion of *hitqashrut* (*hiskashres*), “binding” oneself to the rebbe, associated in the above citation from *Tanya* with the Sephirah of *yesod*, which R. Menachem Mendel emphasized regularly, and

⁵³⁰ *B.L.*, 11.

⁵³¹ See ??? on the significance of the pillar of fire in Hazal.

⁵³² Rapoport-Albert. Wolfson *Open Secret?*

⁵³³ *Derushe hatunah*, 26; see also references above in fn[45].

⁵³⁴ Ch *Bittul*, “Bringing the Wondrous Closer.”

most emphatically in the period immediately following Rayyats's passing during the uncertainty of the interregnum.⁵³⁵

The relationship between Rayyats and his second son-in-law, depicted in retrospect as embodying that of *yesod* and *malkhut*, took on aspects that exceeded the mere fact that the latter married the former's daughter. In some ways, by binding R. Menachem Mendel to his family through marriage, Rayyats was binding him to himself. To begin with it seems that it was Rayyats who pursued the match from the outset.⁵³⁶ When R. Menachem Mendel was ultimately persuaded to travel to meet his future wife Haya Mushka and to spend several weeks with the Rebbe's family in the summer of 1923, a significant percentage of that time was spent with Rayyats (and his older son-in-law) in Rostov, away from his intended and the rest of the women who remained in a vacation area. During this time Rayyats "studied deeply *hilkhot* (the "laws" or subject of) *Mendel*... for several hours a day," getting to know his future son-in-law.⁵³⁷ This was not an unusual approach to choosing a son-in-law in rabbinic families; in any case, "dating" the daughter's intended indicates that the match connotes a certain bond between father-in-law and son-in-law that exceeds the fact of the marriage alone. Certainly in this case Rayyats was also gaining a devoted Hasid and someone who would certainly contribute to the court of Lubavitch.⁵³⁸

Years later, Rayyats describe the care that R. Menachem Mendel afforded him during a period of convalescence in a letter to Haya Mushka. "He cares for my every need," writes Rayyats, "not only as [would] a devoted son-in-law, but like a good daughter."⁵³⁹ Rayyats was apparently setting Haya Mushka's mind at ease that her own absence from his side at this critical juncture was not resulting in any diminishment in his care, that R. Menachem Mendel was doing as good a job as she would have. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that R. Menachem Mendel is described in terms of the feminine, the *meqabel*.

The Rebbe from his side described his wedding anniversary as "the day that I was connected to you (the Hasidim) and you to me."⁵⁴⁰ His marriage not only opened the door to his becoming rebbe, endowing him with the political and cultural standing to occupy that position, but was the condition that empowered R. Menachem Mendel to function as rebbe on the spiritual level. He could channel Rayyats because he was a son-in-law, not by his own powers. In this connection we should note that, while it was uncommon for the Rebbe to refer to himself, and he usually spoke in terms of the directives, teachings, etc. of his father-in-law, on at least one occasion he spoke more openly than usual about his own position, although here to couched in oblique references. This was at a *farbrengen* of 16 Kislev, 5752 (November 23, 1991), on the Sabbath following his wedding anniversary two days earlier. While the central theme of this *farbrengen* did not relate specifically to his marriage, there were a couple of unique and quite illuminating references. The following quotation continues from the Rebbe's preceding

⁵³⁵ Cf. *Torat Menahem: Hitvaaduyot – 5710*, passim.

⁵³⁶ Shmotkin and Oberlander, *The Early Years*, 112.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid*, 117.

⁵³⁸ According to R. Menachem Mendel's mother, Chana Schneerson, Rayyats referred to him as his "Minister of Education" yet before the proposal was sealed (*ibid*, 186). On the later responsibilities delegated to him by Rayyats, see Ch Background, "The Written Discourse"; S.D. Levine, introductions to *Igrot qodesh*, vols. 1-3; Hayom Yom shalshet hayachas. Whether Rayyats saw him as a possible successor at this time, see Ehrlich ??? for the problems in ascertaining this; but see ruminations of Eliyahu Haim Althaus, *Early Years*, 394.

⁵³⁹ *Igrot qodesh – rayyats*, vol. 15, 130.

⁵⁴⁰ *Derushe hatumah*, iv.

pronouncement that “all matters of divine service have been completed... all is ready for the coming of the Messiah”⁵⁴¹:

We may say that the particular advantage of our generation is alluded to in the *haftarah* (weekly pericope from the prophetic books that is read following the Sabbath reading from the Torah) ... ‘And the house of Jacob shall be a fire and *the house of Joseph* a flame, and the house of Esau [will be] as straw etc. They will conquer the south, Esau’s mountain etc. and the exile etc. until *Zarephath* etc. shall conquer the cities of the south. Then saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to mete out judgement upon the mountain of Esau’ (Obadiah, 1:18-21):

One of the innovations of (Joseph and the continuation of) “*the house of Joseph*” in our time (my father-in-law the Rebbe, leader of *our generation*, whose first name was Yosef), relative to previous generations, including the generation of the *Alter Rebbe* (“the house of Jacob”) is, that through him “the wellsprings [of Hasidism] were disseminated to the outside” literally throughout the world, to the furthest reaches of “outside,” such as the country of France (*Tsarefat*), which, in the times of the *Alter Rebbe*... there was not as stable a revelation of the dissemination of the Hasidic teachings in France, since it was so lowly... Only in our time, through “the house of Joseph,” has there come about the revelation and dissemination of the wellsprings in France as well.⁵⁴²

To whom does the term “the house of Joseph” refer in this passage? Rayyats is “Joseph” himself; the “house of Joseph” is the “continuation (*hemshekh*)” after Rayyats. The term could be understood as referring to the Hasidic community that survived the sixth rebbe as a corporate entity, who had indeed built up the Ḥabad community in France during Rayyats’s lifetime and even more so after his demise. This is through the power of Joseph, as they are the “house” of Joseph, his representatives and delegates. However, the term (also) has a more specific connotation, as becomes clear a little further on in the discussion. The Rebbe refers to the *Drushey khasene* which had just been reprinted (and which the Rebbe personally distributed on the Sunday following this *farbrengen* to the Ḥabad community), and “which were said by my father-in-law, the Rebbe, leader of our generation.” In a footnote the Rebbe adds that this was “at the wedding of “the house of Joseph” in the year 5689 (1928).”⁵⁴³ Here the “house of Joseph” refers more directly to Rayyats’s family, specifically his daughter Haya Mushka and R. Menachem Mendel himself. Thus the earlier reference to the promulgation of Ḥabad teaching in France through the “house of Joseph” can legitimately be taken as a reference to the years R. Menachem Mendel and Haya Mushka themselves spent living in France. Indeed, this is seen more clearly to be the case when examining the talk given by the Rebbe on the subsequent Sabbath:

The primary and most complete purification [of France] ... was achieved in our times, through my father-in-law the Rebbe, leader of our generation, who... sent emissaries there from among the members of his household who lived there for a number of years, and who performed their divine service of the study of the revealed aspects of Torah

⁵⁴¹ Excerpts are from Schneerson, *Sefer ha-sihot – 5752*, vol. I, 155-167. This transcript is the official, edited (*mugah*) transcript, and it may not always faithfully reflect what was said and how it was said at the *farbrengen* itself. Translation is mine, emphases in the original.

⁵⁴² Ibid, 163-64.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, 165 and fn110.

(*nigleh*) as well as the inner dimension (*penimiyut*) of Torah. He sent manuscripts of Hasidic teaching as well as his sacred letters, and various items were prepared there for publication...⁵⁴⁴

A footnote clarifies who the reference is to: “At the end of winter of 5693 (1933), the Rebbe and the righteous Rebbetzin Haya Mushka settled in France, where they lived for eight years until 5701 (1941) – *The editor*.”⁵⁴⁵

Even so, the term “house of Joseph” defies being easily parsed. Does it refer to the Rebbe? After all, the editorial work and presumably much of the Torah study referred to would have been done by him. To both the Rebbe and his wife? They were the two principals at the “wedding of the house of Joseph.” Perhaps primarily to Haya Mushka, who was after all a native member of the “house of Joseph,” and to the Rebbe only as adjunct? It seems to me that this ambiguity is intentional, as it expresses the Rebbe’s perspective on his own position: He is a member of the house of Joseph because he is/was married to an actual member of said household, who in his view had a special relationship with her father which he partook of through her as her spouse. By the same token, the fact that the Hasidim generally could also be justifiably the referents of this term points to the sense in which R. Menachem Mendel saw himself as in essence a Hasid among the other Hasidim of his father-in-law, albeit one who was specifically empowered to realize the wishes and directives of Rayyats as his physical representation in the world of the living.

It is worthwhile to inspect a few passages from one other talk of the Rebbe’s in which he speaks directly about his late wife on the occasion of her fourth *yohrtsayt* on 22 Shevat of the same year (January 27, 1992). The Rebbe begins by referring to “the *yohrtsayt* of the daughter of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, leader of our generation, on the 22 Shevat. In addition to her own worthiness, she also possesses the merit of her father (especially as a daughter has a special relationship with the father (see *bNiddah* 31a)), and she was raised and educated by him etc.”⁵⁴⁶ In addition to articulating the “special relationship” of Rayyats and Haya Mushka, the references in a footnote on this text make it more clear that this relationship is connected with rebbehood, thus reinforcing the supposition that the powers of a rebbe ran through her to her husband.⁵⁴⁷ This notion is further substantiated by a further passage in this talk:

In the generation of the leader of our generation itself there are several phases and periods. In general, there are three stages: 1) The tenth day of the eleventh month (10 Shevat, 5710 (1950)) – the conclusion of the era of my father-in-law the Rebbe, leader of our generation’s efforts during his lifetime in this world. 2) The next day – the eleventh day of the eleventh month (the first full day after his ascent (*histalkes*)), and particularly in the eleventh year (5711 (1951)) – when the continuation and renewal of a new period began, and “the luminaries were hung up” for the seventh generation... 3) The period after the passing (*histalkes*) of my father-in-law the Rebbe’s daughter, on the twenty-second day of the eleventh month...⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, 181.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, fn38.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, vol. II, 345.

⁵⁴⁷ See *Hayom Yom*, 57; Folleh Kahan??

⁵⁴⁸ *Sefer ha-sihot* ibid, 348-49.

Here we should remark on a couple of things. First of all, the Rebbe refers to his wife's passing as a *histalkes*, an "ascent," as is customary when referring to a saintly individual, particularly a Hasidic *tsadik*. Additionally, the Rebbe sees her passing as ushering in a new period in the rebbehood of Rayyats (or of the Rebbe himself), much in the same way as did the passing of Rayyats himself. Hers is a central role in the manifestation of the rebbe-ideal during the second half of the twentieth century.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to parse exactly how her role in the *rebbisteve* (the position of rebbe) plays out in the Rebbe's thought here; suffice it to say that this is intimately connected with the unique and eschatologically-associated significance that the Rebbe understood women to have. Let us limit ourselves to reflecting on one additional passage in a footnote on this talk. The Rebbe refers to the advent of "the light of the Messiah" and the "spirit of the messianic king" that is materializing as "reward for the righteous women in Israel." In the note we find the following:

Note, that *Mashiah* (Messiah) constitutes an acrostic for the name of the departed [MShYH standing for Haya Mushka S[c]hneerson], together with a *yod* (the first letter of both of her father's names [Yosef Yitskhok]... As explained above... [the names] *Hayah Mushka* allude to drawing down the revelation of *yehidah* [the core of the soul] (the Messiah being the collective *yehidah*...) within the ten soul-powers.⁵⁴⁹

In a moment, we will address the Rebbe's messianic view and the role he saw for himself within this process. But it must be noted here that in this passage, R. Menachem Mendel places his late wife in a most central position within this vision. As great as the ambiguity regarding the Rebbe's own pretensions in this matter are, we should not go so far as to say that he is actually depicting her as the Messiah; what I believe is completely fair to say is that whatever his own role may have been, he understood his wife to be intimately linked with it, and possibly even the source of his destiny in this matter.

The upshot of all the above is that the Rebbe's view of himself as the seventh was mediated through the figure of his wife, "the daughter of my father-in-law the Rebbe," as alluded to by the intertextual links between *Bosi legani* and the wedding discourses; as such, with a rebbehood and a messianic vision that was mediated by a woman, this may have impelled the Rebbe's daring innovations with regard to the engagement of women in more prominent ways than had been historically assayed.

Messianic Destiny

Perhaps the most tantalizing element of the Rebbe's biography and leadership tenure is his messianic association. The intensity of the fervor surrounding the arrival of the messiah was arguably singular already at the beginning of his leadership, and over the more than four decades it spanned the rhetoric around it became ever more urgent and immediate. As a sociological phenomenon his messianism became unavoidable in the final years of R. Menachem Mendel's life, featuring prominently in every news article or television report pertaining to the court of Lubavitch. In the realm of scholarship, the topic of the belief of (a segment of) Habad Hasidim in R. Menachem Mendel as the Messiah, as well as the question of the Rebbe's own views about himself on this score, has fueled much discussion. Kraus dedicates a monograph to the Rebbe's

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid, 359 (fn115).

teachings on the “seventh generation” as the era of the advent of the eschaton, although he remains reticent on the question of the Rebbe’s personal beliefs about his messiahship.⁵⁵⁰ Heilmann and Friedman understand the preoccupation with the coming of the messianic age as an outgrowth of the Rebbe’s successes in attaining international influence and recognition as well as his childlessness, dealing with the topic almost exclusively on the sociological level.⁵⁵¹ Wolfson explores the mystical conceptions of R. Menachem Mendel relating to the Messiah, arguing for an extremely subtle and radical perspective on this question which lays latent within the Rebbe’s statements, and which obviates to a large degree the question of what the Rebbe thought about himself.⁵⁵² Ehrlich dedicates a study to the enmeshment of the Rebbe’s views on the issue of the Messiah and those of his Hasidim with the nature and development of the Rebbe’s leadership of Ḥabad; in the course of this he spends some time on parsing the Rebbe’s views of himself in this regard as well, although he too demurs from taking a definitive position on this question.⁵⁵³ A number of other articles and essays treating the Lubavitch movement and the Rebbe’s leadership have been inexorably drawn to the issue of his messianism.

It is beyond the scope of the current project to wade into this subject much beyond what we have already noted in previous chapters. What I wish to point to here is how the Rebbe’s unique brand of messianism is fed by and midrashizes the *hemshekh* of Rayyats’s *hillula*. We have already explored the concept of the seventh generation, and how in his initial discourse R. Menachem Mendel explicitly designated his generation as the one that would usher in the messianic age, and this based outright on his reading of Rayyats’s *Bosi legani*. Granted that messianic ferment had begun under Rayyats, and can be traced as far back as Rashab’s landmark talk titled *Ma’amar kol ha-yotse* (the discourse “all who go forth”), in which the latter correlated his establishment of his *yeshivah Tomkhey temimim* with the spiritual battles that would be necessary to clear the way for the Messiah.⁵⁵⁴ Rayyats published this discourse in the 1940’s, at a time when he himself would speak of the conflagration consuming European Jewry as the “birthpangs of the Messiah,” and when he urged “immediately to repentance; immediately to redemption.”⁵⁵⁵ Granted as well that R. Menachem Mendel’s was distinctive in its prominence, centrality, persistence, and urgency, and that this cannot be accounted for solely on the basis of *Bosi legani*. Nevertheless, it is unquestionably the case that this messianism was present from the beginning, and that it was unambiguously attributed to the sixth rebbe’s parting words.

Likewise, the consequence of the Rebbe’s messianic vision was the great and unabated emphasis on “disseminating the wellsprings (of Ḥabad teaching) to the outside,” through the publication of an increasing number of Ḥabad tracts, their availability in a plurality of languages, the “mitzvah campaigns,” having the book of *Tanya* printed in every conceivable location, and so on. This focus on creating the channels by which the most sublime concepts could be made accessible to the most disaffected Jew (or even non-Jew) the Rebbe found as being central to *Bosi legani*. In the previous chapter we had occasion to examine one instance of this confluence of messianism and the need to actively promulgate the Ḥabad wellsprings within the Rebbe’s *maymer*; more broadly, the preoccupation with disseminating *khasides* links directly with one of the prominent themes in *Bosi legani*, that “at the time of achieving victory in war, [the king]

⁵⁵⁰ *Ha-shevi ‘i*.

⁵⁵¹ *The Rebbe*.

⁵⁵² *Open Secret*.

⁵⁵³ *The Messiah of Brooklyn*.

⁵⁵⁴ *Liqqute dibburim*, vol. IV, ??.

⁵⁵⁵ Hayom Yom.

lavishly disburses (*mevazvez*) all of his treasuries,” these being “all the stored up treasures of precious fortunes that had been collected and gathered over many years, generation after generation.”⁵⁵⁶ These treasures are clearly correlated in the Rebbe’s thought with the cache of textual material bequeathed by the rebbes of Ḥabad, representing the wellsprings of the Besht.⁵⁵⁷ It is noteworthy in this regard that this theme is one of the areas of overlap between the wedding discourses and those of *Bosi legani*.⁵⁵⁸

Maymer, Succession, and Continuity

I have already touched on the idea that the recitation of an original *maymer* is the purview of a rebbe only, or at the very least someone who is rebbe material.⁵⁵⁹ The function of a rebbe is, in a very important way, to reveal the new discourses and to serve as the bridge between the supernal realms and the terrestrial. Arguably, his other capacities as rebbe, whether to dispense blessings and advice to individuals, guide in spiritual and religious matters, set the agenda for the community, etc., are all outgrowths of this central role. This is why R. Menachem Mendel refused to recite a Ḥabad discourse until such time as he was fully convinced that he was destined to lead the seventh generation, and why he signaled his acceptance of his new role with the delivery of *khasides*.

I also noted that under the Rebbe, a new form of *maymer* came into being, the “*maymer k’eyn sikhe*,” the discourse in the format of a talk.⁵⁶⁰ This was a format used to “smuggle” in a discourse when the Rebbe felt he was unable to perform the *maymer* with full pomp and circumstance. At the end of 1985 there began a legal battle between the Ḥabad movement and the Rebbe’s nephew, Barry S. Gourary, over ownership of Rayyats’s erstwhile library.⁵⁶¹ The period of indecision, extending from at least the summer of 1985 through January 6, 1987, when the verdict came down in the Rebbe’s favor, was a time of great tension and aggravation for him. The challenge to Ḥabad’s control of the library entailed an implicit challenge to the Rebbe’s legitimacy as rebbe.⁵⁶² It is hazardous to speculate on what exactly the relation is, but it is the case from that point forward the Rebbe delivered only *maymorim* in the format of a talk, except for two highly unusual occasions in 1989.⁵⁶³ In some sense, this frontal assault on R. Menachem Mendel’s claim to rebbehood also affected the way the *divrey elokim khayim* were transmitted.

A second destabilization of the Rebbe’s connection to the channel of divine effulgence came with the passing of Haya Mushka, his wife and daughter of Rayyats, on 22 Shevat, 5748 (February 10, 1988). Here too there was a shift in the production of the discourses. After Rosh Hashanah of 5749 (September 1988) the Rebbe ceased orally delivering even discourses in the

⁵⁵⁶ *B.L.*, vol. I, 24 (Arabic numerals).

⁵⁵⁷ See *B.L.*, vol. II, 391, “these are the highest revelations of the internality of Torah”; *ibid*, 560 ff., re: the transferal of the treasury via the Besht, and in the manner of Ḥabad through the rebbes; *ibid*, vol. I, 369.

⁵⁵⁸ See especially *B.L.*, vol. II, 475 ff, where R. Menachem Mendel delivers a discourse that amalgamates the two sources.

⁵⁵⁹ Ch. Background, “Farbrengen”; “Conclusion.” See Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, ?? re: R. Dov Ber’s recitation of discourses during his father’s lifetime; ??? re: the sons of the *Tsemakh Tsedek*. (5626 printed maymorim of Maharash before histalkus.) See *Derushe hatunah*, ?? intro to Lekha Dodi, citing Rebbe’s great-grandfather RBS (Mondshine).

⁵⁶⁰ Ch Background, “Mugah vs. Bilti Mugah.”

⁵⁶¹ Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States v. Gourary; see Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 216 ff.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, 55.

⁵⁶³ See Shagalov, *Mafte’ah*, vol. III.

format of a talk almost entirely (there were a handful of occasions when a discourse was orated over the next three-and-a-half years until R. Menachem Mendel suffered a stroke that denied him his power of speech). Once again, interpreting the import of this turn of events must remain highly speculative; nevertheless, the coincidence of losing the woman his marriage to whom had connected him to the Hasidim in the first place and the almost complete cessation of delivering *maymorim* orally can only be significant.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of channeling divinity by means of the discourses did not come to an end. It was during the same eras of the court case and then the passing of the Rebbetzin that the occurrence of the production of edited (*mugah*) discourses accelerated, to the point that they were published with a regularity that almost matched that of the oral *maymorim*.⁵⁶⁴ It is possible that this sudden surge in putting out edited material was initially connected with the legal battles going on at the time; the Rebbe had begun having many of his regular talks during *farbrengens* released as *mugah* as well during this same period. This state of affairs would continue until the Rebbe's illness. Perhaps at a time when greater scrutiny was being directed towards the Rebbe's words and actions, it was deemed prudent to ensure that the transcripts that circulated of what he had said were properly supervised. Be that as it may, these edited, annotated, and printed discourses generated the same interest and reverence, and partook of the same charisma, as did the original discourses.

One illustrative example is the discourse that was made available for the holiday of Purim in 1991, *Quntres Purim – 5751*. As in each booklet containing an edited *maymer*, this discourse was preceded by a preface (*petah davar*). Usually the preface provided only the basic information about the discourse: the date for which it was being published, its *dibbur hamaskhil*, and the date it was originally recited. In this case, an additional paragraph was included, as follows:

This is the *second* discourse (in addition to the first discourse, *Va-yehi omen et Hadassah*) that was recited at the Purim *farbrengen* of that year [5713 – 1953], the recitation of which was connected, apparently, to the events that occurred during that period to the extent of the downfall of the ruler of that country [i.e. Soviet Russia] who was an oppressor of Israel, as was understood at the time from the story that the Rebbe told – as a prologue and immediately preceding the recitation of this discourse – regarding the directive of the Rebbe Rashab during the period of the [Bolshevik] Revolution after the deposition of the Tsar.⁵⁶⁵

This highly allusive introduction to the discourse was immediately understood by the Hasidim, referring as it did to a well-known story within Ḥabad about the *maymer* that had put an end to Stalin and to the Doctor's Plot that he was orchestrating.⁵⁶⁶ The discourse was not chosen to be edited for this occasion by chance; Purim 1991 coincided with February 28, the day that then-President Bush declared a ceasefire and the liberation of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein, thus ending the first Gulf War.⁵⁶⁷ Once again the discourse was seen as having brought about the

⁵⁶⁴ See Ch Background, "The Written Discourse"; Shagalov, *ibid*.

⁵⁶⁵ Schneerson, *Sefer ha-ma'amarim – meluqat*, vol. V, 188 (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁶⁶ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2995717/jewish/The-Miracle-of-Stalins-Death.htm
Accessed December 12, 2021. Forward at https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/3798094/jewish/Al-Kein-Karu-5713.htm Accessed December 12, 2021. See Schneerson, *Torat Menahem - hitva'aduyot*, vol. VIII, 49.

⁵⁶⁷ See Heilman and Friedman, *The Rebbe*, 226 ff. regarding the Rebbe's pronouncements in relation to the first Gulf War.

downfall of an oppressor of Israel, a modern-day Haman. Whether in oral or print form, the discourse's potency persisted.

The question of whether Ḥabad of the second half of the twentieth century can be meaningfully considered to continue the tradition of its previous generation is one that continues to be debated by scholars.⁵⁶⁸ There is no question that there were significant deviations from what had been traditional and a reshuffling of priorities under the Rebbe's leadership, a situation that R. Menachem Mendel himself acknowledged on occasion.⁵⁶⁹ However, in the Ḥabad discourse, its forms, conventions, expectations, and central place in the life of Ḥabad even down to today, there is a fundamental continuity of ethos and of conceptualization of reality from the first all the way through the seventh generation.

⁵⁶⁸ Kraus, *Ha-shevi'i*, 21 ff, et passim. See Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 24.

⁵⁶⁹ See Schneerson, *Liqute sihot*, vol. IXX, 314.

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ADDENDUM

Chapter Seven (5710)

Nowⁱ the letter *yod* which is on the letter *dalet*, through which the design of the *dalet* is differentiated from the design of the *resh* is specifically on its hind part.ⁱⁱ The *yod*, although the smallest of all the letters, is the beginning of all the letters; for each letter begins with the letter *yod*.⁵⁷⁰ This is the [notion] that “By the *yod* was the world-to-come created.”⁵⁷¹ Regarding this it says, ‘For all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth,’⁵⁷² which the Targum translates as “which unites heaven and earth.”⁵⁷³ⁱⁱⁱ This is the Sefirah of *yesod* (Foundation), from which *malkhut* (Sovereignty) receives.⁵⁷⁴

The [notion] that it “unites heaven and earth” [means as follows]: heaven (*shamayim*) and earth [represent the following] – *shamayim* [can be constituted as] *esh* (fire) and *mayim* (water),^{iv} which are the aspects of *hesed* (Kindness) and *gevurah* (Sternness), while “earth” is the aspect of *malkhut*. This is [the notion] that through the Sefirah of *yesod*, *hesed* and *gevurah* are unified with *malkhut*.

However, ‘The pauper (*rash*) has not anything (*kol*).’^{575v} The letter *resh* lacks the “*kol* that is in heaven and on earth.’ They (sic) have no unifying Sefirah of *yesod*. Speech, too, is present in a state of utmost concealment and obscurity.^{vi} Thus it is written ‘I have been mute, still, I have remained silent etc.’⁵⁷⁶ Even speech is present in a state of utmost concealment, since the light and energy that enlivens the *sitra aħara* (“other side”) is a radiance of a radiance, the externality of the externality, and is present in a state of utmost concealment.

Thus did Jacob say, ‘I have all,’⁵⁷⁷ while Esau said, ‘I have much.’^{578vii} For in the realm of holiness, which is the aspect and level of Jacob, he says ‘I have all (*kol*),’ the aspect of “*kol* which unifies heaven and earth.” But Esau, who is the shells (*qelipah*) and the “other side,” he said ‘I have much.’ He does not have the binding aspect of *kol* like Jacob. Rather, he has “much,” a multitude of physical endowments.^{viii}

This accords with the statement of the Master of the Academy: “The one who is minor, he is great; the one who is great, he is minor.”⁵⁷⁹ In the realm of holiness, which “is minor,” for “she diminishes herself,”^{ix} as it is written ‘Can Jacob rise again when he is so small?’⁵⁸⁰ – “he is great,” through the revelation of the aspect of *kol*. But “one who is great,” possessing “much,” “he is minor,” for “the pauper has not anything (*kol*).” [That one’s wealth] is only of physical endowments.

⁵⁷⁰ See also *Igrot qodesh – Rayyats*, vol. 9, 485.

⁵⁷¹ b*Menahot*, 29b. *Genesis Rabbah*, 12:10.

⁵⁷² I Chronicles, 29:11.

⁵⁷³ Cited in *Zohar* I, 31a; II, 116a; III, 257a.

⁵⁷⁴ See *Zohar* I, *ibid*; and elsewhere.

⁵⁷⁵ II Samuel, 12:3.

⁵⁷⁶ Psalms, 39:3.

⁵⁷⁷ Genesis, 33:11

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

⁵⁷⁹ *Zohar* I, 122b; *Zohar* III, 168a.

⁵⁸⁰ Amos, 7:2; 7:5.

Thus it is written, ‘Young lions (*kefirim*) were impoverished and went hungry.’⁵⁸¹ The *Zohar* interprets this as referring to the seventy bullocks (*parim*) brought on the [Sukkot] festival.⁵⁸² Thus ‘*kefirim* were impoverished,’ for they become progressively diminished.^x It is known that the seventy bullocks correspond to the seventy archangels [of the nations of the world].⁵⁸³ Physical endowment is referred to as “were impoverished,” being the aspect of the poor individual etc.

In *Mikdash melekh*^{xi} it is said that *kelipah* and *sitra ahara* are called “bullocks”;⁵⁸⁴ and both are true.^{xii} Since the energy that enlivens them as a whole is merely a radiation of a radiation of that which radiates from the realm of holiness, therefore the influence [reaches them] in the utmost of concealment and obscurity, representing an endowment of the externality of the externality.^{xiii}

This is why this very fact itself provokes them to greater egotism. It is like Pharaoh, who said,⁵⁸⁵ ‘The river is mine, and I have made myself [great].’⁵⁸⁶ This is the very opposite of truth. For the truth is that [the Nile] was blessed through Jacob’s blessing (as stated in Rashi’s commentary on the verse ‘And Jacob blessed etc.’⁵⁸⁷).^{xiv} *Par’oh* (Pharaoh) is of the same letters as *ha-oref* (the nape);^{588xv} he even denied and was ungrateful, saying “my river is mine etc.” Thus, through the endowment he becomes more egotistical.

Summary: He continues [to explain] that the *yud* behind the *dalet* is “*kol* that unifies,” “I have *kol*.” “The *rash* [*resh*] has not *kol*.” *Kelipah*’s “I have much” causes egotism.

⁵⁸¹ Psalms, 34:11.

⁵⁸² **III, 259a.**

⁵⁸³ See *bSukkah*, 55b; *Zohar* II, 187a; III, 54b (*Tosefta*); 103b (*Ra’aya mehemna*).

⁵⁸⁴ In ms 830 from which this discourse was printed in 5710 [1950]: “*rashim*.” See *Ohr ha-torah, Terumah*, 1614. *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5633*, vol. 1, 153. 5658, 212.

⁵⁸⁵ Ezekiel, 29:3 (there: *ye’ori*. Thus also at the end of this chapter, and below in the *hemshekh* at chs. 13 and 15).

⁵⁸⁶ See *Likkutei sihot*, vol. 21, 40; *ibid*, fn33.

⁵⁸⁷ Genesis, 47:10.

⁵⁸⁸ Luria’s *Likkutei torah, Va-yeshev*, 39, 40 (s.v. *Va-yehi... atah neva’er sod yosef*). *Beg. Shemot*.

^{xvi}At first, *malkhut*, subsequently, the “beginning of all letters”⁵⁸⁹ – that all instances of drawing down divinity are through it, in consonance with what preceded, that *malkhut* is the culminating level of each letter etc. within the letter itself. This is the notion that it is likewise in the system of worlds **as a whole**, and that is the notion that “by *yud* was the world-to-come created.”

The Besht on the verse ‘And G-d said let there be light’⁵⁹⁰ (*Kesser shem tov*, part 2, at its end), and the Maggid added ‘and there was evening’ and through this ‘and there was morning’⁵⁹¹ (*Ohr torah* on that verse).

The explanation of the matter⁵⁹² (discourse beginning with this verse, 5668 (1908))

This⁵⁹³ occurs through *yud*, the Sefirah of *yesod* (so in *Bati*, ’58⁵⁹⁴) two aspects:⁵⁹⁵ that *malkhut* receives from it and that it unifies.

The matter may be explained⁵⁹⁶ based on what *Admor ha-zaken* writes ‘Joseph is a fruitful son’ (Addenda to *Torah ohr*, beginning portion *ve-yehi*)

But⁵⁹⁷ ‘the pauper etc.’ ‘I have been muted etc.’

The relation, connection, and relation⁵⁹⁸ will be understood from the opposite and from the other extreme which will be in the future time when the *tzimtzum* is rectified, and it says, ‘all flesh will see etc. spoke,’ and *Admor ha-emitza*’i explains (*Torat hayim* vol. 2 964), whereas during the exilic era ‘I have been muted, still, I have been silent,’ and the *Tzemah tzedek* explains (*Eikhah* 19, *Ohr ha-torah* 51. Psalms 39:3) abbreviation of “*Nidah*”⁵⁹⁹ from the *vav*, reverse of “that unifies heaven and earth.”⁶⁰⁰ In the future era there will be emphatically a great sound and “the voice of the bride” and in *Midrash tehillim* “he will allow the prohibitions of *niddah*.”⁶⁰¹ This is what is written “she is mute before **her shearers**,”⁶⁰² like hair (*Likkutei torah, Massei*, 88c).

⁵⁸⁹ See ch. 2 of the (5717) discourse, that the letter *yud* (on the back of the letter *dalet*) – which indicates submission and “she makes herself small,” which is the notion of *malkhut* of *atzilut* – although it is the smallest of all letters, it is the beginning of all letters, meaning, that all instances of drawing down divine energy come about through it etc.

⁵⁹⁰ That through the Name *Elokim*, the attribute of severity which constricts the light, there will be a sustainable light which the world will be able to tolerate.

⁵⁹¹ For from the “evening,” which is the *tzimtzum* (constriction) there was made and created “the morning.”

⁵⁹² That “by the *yud* was the world-to-come created” – content of chs 3-4 of the discourse.

⁵⁹³ The notion that “by *yud* was the world-to-come created” – is drawn down and revealed through the *yud* of the Sefirah of *yesod*.

⁵⁹⁴ Discourse *Bati le-gani* 5658 (1898).

⁵⁹⁵ It (*yesod*) has two aspects: a) *malkhut* receives from it, b) it unifies heaven and earth: the union of *hesed* and *gevurah* (חסד – אהבה ומינים) and *malkhut* (earth) – beginning of ch. 5 of the discourse.

⁵⁹⁶ Continuation of ch. 5 of the discourse.

⁵⁹⁷ This is all true of the letter *dalet* which is of the side of holiness. Whereas on the opposite side, the letter *resh*, regarding this it says ‘the pauper has no *kol*.’ Furthermore, the letter *dalet* is also related to speech [*dibbur*], whereas on the opposite side, speech is utterly concealed and hidden – ‘I have been muted, made still’ (beginning ch. 6 of discourse).

⁵⁹⁸ Of the concealment and hiding of speech to the notion of “the pauper has nothing” (continuation of ch. 6 of the discourse).

⁵⁹⁹ “The *hei* has wandered” (ה' נד) from the *vav* (meaning, that the final *hei*, the Sefirah of *malkhut*, becomes distant from the letter *vav* which indicates drawing down from above, and through this speech is concealed.

⁶⁰⁰ בשמיא וארעא = בש"א (the attachment of the *vav* – *z'eir anpin*, heavens – with the *hei* – *malkhut*, earth).

⁶⁰¹ Note 9 at the end of ch. 6 of the discourse.

⁶⁰² Meaning that speech is in a state of silence and stillness, and the drawing down of vitality is like through hair.

Therefore regarding Esau, “much,”⁶⁰³ he does not have “*kol*,” an extremely external radiation,⁶⁰⁴ increases the physical. This is likewise understood regarding divine service, based on what it says, “The needs of your people are multiple” because “their minds are limited,” and *Admor maharash* explained (beginning *Mayim rabim*). “With half his desire achieved” (summer 5700 153).⁶⁰⁵ ‘My river is mine’⁶⁰⁶ (*U-ma’ayan*, sec. 3).

⁶⁰³ See ch. 7 of the discourse, that Jacob said “I have all (*kol*),” and Esau said “I have much.”

⁶⁰⁴ Meaning, that on the opposite side, one who is great is minor – receiving merely an extremely external radiation, physical endowment alone.

⁶⁰⁵ See note 11 at the end of ch. 7 of the discourse.

⁶⁰⁶ See ch. 8 of the discourse.

‘I⁶⁰⁷ have come to my garden, my sister, the bride.’⁶⁰⁸ It is stated in *Midrash rabbah* ad loc,⁶⁰⁹ “To my garden (*le-gani*) [means] to my matrimonial canopy (*le-ginuni*),^{xvii} for the primary [dwelling of] the divine presence (*shekhinah*) was in the nether realms.”^{xviii} However, through the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and the subsequent sins, [people] caused the *shekhinah* to depart from the earth until the seventh heaven (as the Midrash elaborates). Then, through the divine service of the righteous, these brought and drew the *shekhinah* down from above downward, until Moses, the seventh – and “all sevenths are beloved”^{610xix} – and brought it down from the first heaven down to earth, which is the culmination of all instances of drawing downward (*hamshakhot*).^{xx}

Now the primary revelation of the *shekhinah* occurred in the Tabernacle and Sanctuary.^{xxi} It is written ‘Let them make me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell (*ve-shakhanti*) among them.’⁶¹¹ This means that through the Sanctuary ‘I will dwell’ occurs within each and every individual as well.^{612xxii} This is through the divine service of the righteous; as the Master of the *hilula* explains in the discourse of the day of the *hilula*^{613xxiii} the Zohar’s statement at length: “When the Other Side (*sitra ahara*)^{xxiv} is subdued (and when the *sitra ahara* is transformed),^{xxv} the glory of the Holy One, blessed be he, rises up throughout all the worlds.”^{614xxvi} Through the divine service of *itkaphya* (subjugation) and *it’hafkha* (transformation), the “glory of the Holy One, blessed be he,” is drawn down, (a revelation of divine light) that is present in all worlds equally.^{xxvii} This means that it is a light that transcends the worlds, and even transcends the light which transcends all worlds (*sovev kol almin*) (as such light relates to the worlds albeit in a transcendent manner⁶¹⁵). This is the drawing down of the “fundamental (*ikar*) *shekhinah*,”^{xxviii} in a manner that is superior even to the way this drawing down was at the beginning of Creation.^{xxix}

This is also [the meaning of] the sacrificial service that took place in the Tabernacle and the Temple,⁶¹⁶ which is an [act of] “elevation from below upward” which effects “drawing down” of “a pleasing fragrance”^{xxx} “from above downward.”

[My father-in-law] continues and explains in the discourse⁶¹⁷ that this is the meaning of what is said regarding the Tabernacle (about which it says “let them make Me a Sanctuary”),

⁶⁰⁷ This discourse is **primarily** based on the seventh chapter [*the chapter that relates to this year – see Torah menahem – sefer ha-ma’amarim bati le-gani, vol. 1, vi; see citations there*] of the *hemshekh* “*Bati le-gani* – 5710.”

⁶⁰⁸ Song of Songs, 5:1.

⁶⁰⁹ Song Rabbah, ad loc.

⁶¹⁰ Lev. Rabbah, 29:11.

⁶¹¹ Ex. 25:8.

⁶¹² Cited in the name of “*Razal*” in *Likkutei torah*, beg. portion of *Nasso*, 20b; and in several places. See *Reshit hokhmah*, Gate of Love, ch. 6 toward the beginning (s.v. *u-shenei pessukim*); *Alshikh* on Exodus, *ibid* (“*sham’ati lomdim*”); *Shenei luhot ha-berit*, 69a; 201a; sec. *torah she-biketav*, *Terumah*, 325b. Cf. *Likkutei sihot*, vol. 36, 173, n45.

⁶¹³ Discourse *Bati le-gani* – 5710, ch. 1.

⁶¹⁴ *Tanya*, ch. 27 (34a) and in *Likkutei torah* beg. portion *Pikkudei* cites *Zohar* II, 128b (*Likkutei torah*, *ibid*, also cites *Zohar*, *ibid*, 67b; see also *ibid*, 184a). See also *Torah ohr*, *Va-yak’hel*, 89d; *Likkutei torah*, *Hukath*, 65c.

⁶¹⁵ See *Torah ohr*, *Meggilat Esther*, 98b; *Sefer ha-ma’amarim* – 5679, 371; 5689, 40; 5697, 192; and elsewhere.

⁶¹⁶ Discourse *Bati le-gani* – 5710, ch. 2.

⁶¹⁷ Ch. 3.

“Make panels for the Tabernacle of upright *shittim* (acacia) wood.”^{618xxxix} *Shatta* means “turning aside,”⁶¹⁹ as in “the people strolled.”⁶²⁰ This means straying from the king’s – the world’s King – road. This is due to the spirit of nonsense which enters them; as in the saying, “A person does not transgress a sin unless a spirit of nonsense has entered him.”⁶²¹ Divine service consists of transforming the nonsense of the opposite side via nonsense (*shittim*) of the holy realm. This is the divine service which achieves the drawing down of the *ikar shekhinah* to the realm below.

[My father-in-law] explains additionally,⁶²² that the above indicates as well the preciseness of the notion that of the upright *shittim* wood, *kerashim* (panels) were made, specifically.^{xxxii} For, the word *keresh* (panel) is composed of the three letters *kuf*, *resh*, *shin*.^{xxxiii} It is stated in the *Zohar* that the letter *shin* is “of the side of truth,” whereas the letters *kuf* and *resh* are of the opposite side.⁶²³ [My father-in-law] explains in the discourse, that corresponding to the letter *resh* which is of the side of the opposite, there is the letter *dalet* of the side of the holy.^{xxxiv} Although apparently the content and meaning of *dalet* and *resh* are etymologically related to *dalut* and *reshut* (indigence and impoverishment), meaning that both indicate poverty, nevertheless they are entirely different from one another.⁶²⁴ This to the extent that should one exchange a *dalet* for a *resh*, this would destroy worlds.^{625xxxv}

[My father-in-law] explains further the distinction between the shape of the letter *dalet* and the shape of the letter *resh*. The letter *dalet*, being of the side of the holy realm, possesses an additional *yud* at its rear that is not present in the letter *resh*. The letter *yod* is a point, which expresses “her self was diminished,”⁶²⁶ having no significance in its own estimation, which is the notion of *bitul* (abnegation).^{xxxvi} Through this it becomes a receptive vessel. An analogy may be drawn to a student who, specifically by dint of sufficient self-abnegation, becomes a receptacle for the bestowal of the master. Likewise is it on the side of the holy realm as a rule. Specifically via *bitul*, the point of the *yud*, does one become a receptacle for all supernal matters, as explained at length in the discourse of the day of the *hilulla*⁶²⁷ and its subsequent [discourse]⁶²⁸ in the previous sections.^{xxxvii}

II

[My father-in-law] continues, in the discourse in the new section:⁶²⁹ The *yod* of the letter *dalet* which is at its rear, although it is the smallest letter of all the letters (the notion of *bitul*, “her self was diminished,” as above), it is the beginning of all letters. Each letter begins with a

⁶¹⁸ Ex. 26:15.

⁶¹⁹ See the *hemshekh* of *Ve-kakhah* – 5637, ch. 39 ff. (*Sefer ha-ma'amarim* – 5637, vol. 2, 472 ff.). *Kuntres u-ma'ayan*, sec. 1, ch. 1.

⁶²⁰ Num. 11:8.

⁶²¹ *bSotah*, 3a.

⁶²² In the discourse, ch. 6.

⁶²³ I, Introduction, 2b.

⁶²⁴ See *Pardes*, Gate of Letters (Gate 27), ch. 23; cited in *Torah ohr*, *Megillat esther*, 118a; *Ohr ha-torah*, *Lekh*, 88a.

⁶²⁵ Lev. Rabbah, 19:2.

⁶²⁶ *Zohar* I, 20a.

⁶²⁷ Discourse *Bati le-gani* – 5710.

⁶²⁸ Discourse *Ha-yoshevet ba-ganim* – 5710.

⁶²⁹ Sec. 7. See above n1 and in the bracketed text.

letter *yud*.^{xxxviii} This is the [idea expressed in the saying] “By the *yud* was the world-to-come created.”^{630xxxix}

The overall explanation of this: Previously in the discourse the concept of the *yod* was explained. [It represents] “her self was diminished,” the self-abnegation of the recipient and the student, through which they become a receptacle for the bestowals and *hamshakhot* from above. Here he explains further an even loftier concept [represented] in the *yod*: as it is from the perspective of the benefactor.^{xl} This means that the manner in which the influence is drawn down from the master so that they be able to bestow it below to the recipient is also alluded to by the letter *yod*.

This is the [significance of] the *yud* being the beginning of all letters. To wit: all *hamshakhot* and bestowals below come about via letters. *Ot* (letter) is of the etymology of “*ata boqer* (the morning has arrived),”⁶³¹ which indicates overall drawing down and bestowal below. This begins with the point that is the *yud* (the beginning of all letters).

He then goes on to explain regarding our topic: This is the notion of “By the *yod* was the world-to-come created.”

The idea here is: The overall concept of the *yod*, “her self was diminished,” which is the notion of absolute *bitul*, as it is present in the benefactor is the notion of contraction to the point of total removal.^{xli} Specifically through this is it possible to attain bestowal and *hamshakhah* below. This accords with the interpretation of the Ba’al Shem Tov^{xlii} [*end of Keter shem tov, vol. 2 (sec. 247)*]^{xliii} of the verse ‘And *Elokim* said “let there be light”’⁶³² (for it is seemingly problematic: what relation does the divine name *Elokim* have to light, whose function is light and revelation, i.e. *hamshakhah* and bestowal?^{xliv}): “And *Hashem yitbarakh*^{xlv} said, by the force of the attribute of *Elokim*, which is the attribute of Severity that constricts the light, because of this there will be a sustainable light which the world can tolerate.”^{xlvi}

The Maggid^{xlvii} [Ohr torah *ad loc* (*end of sec. 2*)] explains further regarding the verse’s conclusion, ‘And there was (*va-yehi*) light’: “Our Sages say, “Wherever it states *va-yehi*, it is an expression of anguish.”⁶³³ Thus it says ‘*va-yehi ohr* (and there was light),’ meaning, by the force of *tsimtsum* (constriction), which appears as pain for the world etc., on the contrary, from this does the true light and the sustainment of the world come about.” As “it says, ‘And it was evening, and it was morning etc.’ for from the evening, i.e. the *zimzum*, was the morning created and brought into being.”^{xlviii}

This means that this was not the original light, where “the infinite light filled the area of the void,”^{xlix} and there was no possibility for any existence at all,⁶³⁴ but a light that came through a *zimzum* process. This is the notion of “*va-yehi* light,” *va-yehi* an expression of anguish, indicating the *zimzum* through which the existence of the nether light came about.

Elsewhere [the Maggid] further elucidates, that this is “analogous to a father (who) constricts his intellect and speaks petty words for the sake of his young son. Likewise, all manner of immature characteristics and actions are born within the father. For he loves these immature actions so that his son will be entertained etc.”⁶³⁵ Similarly in the analogue, the Holy One constricts Himself via *zimzum* for the sake of Israel. Thus our Sages say: “In the beginning

⁶³⁰ b*Menahot*, 29b.

⁶³¹ A scriptural phrase – Isaiah, 21:12. See *Torah ohr, Miketv*, 42b; *Likkutei torah, Ba-midbar*, 11c; *Shir ha-shirim*, 33c; and in various places.

⁶³² Genesis, 1:3.

⁶³³ b*Megillah*, 10b.

⁶³⁴ See *Etz hayim*, Gate 1 (*derush iggulim ve-yosher*), Branch II.

⁶³⁵ Beg. *Ohr torah* and *Likkutei Amarim*.

(*bereshit*) (*Elokim* created, the notion of *zimzum*) – for the sake of Israel, who were called “first (*reshit*).”⁶³⁶ For Israel are the children of the Holy One, as it is written, ‘You are sons unto the L-rd, your G-d,’⁶³⁷ and it is for them that the Holy One constricts Himself. The Maggid concludes: “The *zimzum* is called *hokhmah* (wisdom), for *hokhmah* is the *ayin* (naught), as in ‘and wisdom, from whence (*me-ayin*) may it be found?’”⁶³⁸ li

This is the notion of the pointlike *yud* as it is present in the benefactor (which is analogous to the pointlike *yud* of the recipient: *bitul* and self-diminishment through which they become a ready and prepared vessel to receive all the master and benefactor has to offer): in order for there to be a sustainable light, meaning that allowance is made for [another] existence, and that existence should be able to receive the light, this can only occur via “*va-yehi*, an expression of anguish,” the notion of *zimzum*, called *hokhmah*, which is the pointlike *yud*.

III

To explain this matter [*Regarding the following (secs. 3-4) – see discourse U-be’ur ha-inayn – 5668 (Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5668, 162 ff).*⁶³⁹], as well as to understand why he says “by the *yud* was the world-to-come – specifically – created”: It is known that the significance of the world-to-come as a whole is to receive recompense for the Torah study and divine service over the “six thousand years during which the world exists,”^{lii} known as “this world.” Subsequent to this [period] comes the world-to-come, which is fashioned by the Torah study and divine service.^{liii} It is for the recompense of the world-to-come that the soul descended so great a descent, “from a high roof into a deep pit.”⁶⁴⁰

Now, although even prior to this descent below the soul was in a state of very great exaltedness, where it related only to divine matters, as it is written, ‘As G-d lives, before whom I have stood’⁶⁴¹ – “standing implies prayer,”^{642liiv} so that the descent below into a “deep pit” is [indeed] a very great one, [yet] this “descent is for the purpose of ascent.” Through it [the soul] rises to a greater height than it was at prior to its descent.^{lv}

Broadly speaking, the notion of this ascent is [expressed by] what is written, ‘One thing have I requested from G-d etc. to gaze at the pleasantness of G-d.’⁶⁴³ The “pleasantness of G-d”^{lvi} refers to the pleasantness that derives from the divine Name *Havayah* (as written in the Zohar⁶⁴⁴). The primary facet [of this name] is the letter *yud* (with which the divine name *Havayah* begins). This is the *yud* with which the world-to-come was created.⁶⁴⁵ lvii To “behold the pleasantness of *Havayah*,” the entire descent was worthwhile.

The concept: “Pleasantness” is the notion of “pleasure,”^{lviii} as in “May [G-d’s] pleasantness be,”⁶⁴⁶ which is the notion of pleasure.^{lix}

⁶³⁶ Cited in Rashi and Nahmanides at Genesis, 1:1.

⁶³⁷ Deut., 14:1.

⁶³⁸ Job, 28:12.

⁶³⁹ See letter of 16 Shevat of this year (*Igarot kodesh*, vol. 14, 357) in the footnote, where the discourse *Margela be-fumei* – 5709 (*Sefer ha-ma’amarim* – 5709, 132 ff.) is cited.

See likewise *Sefer ha-ma’amarim* – 5684, 303 ff.

⁶⁴⁰ Expression of *hazal*, b*Hagiga*, 5b.

⁶⁴¹ II Kings, 5:16.

⁶⁴² b*Berakhot*, 6b.

⁶⁴³ Psalms, 27:4.

⁶⁴⁴ See places cited in notes of *Zemah Zedek* on Psalms (*Yahel ohr*) ad loc (end of p. 100 ff.)

⁶⁴⁵ See *Likkutei Torah* on our portion (*Be-shalah*) at the beginning.

⁶⁴⁶ Psalms, 90:17.

This may be understood from the nether faculty of pleasure, within the human soul.^{lx} It is distinct and superior to all other soul faculties.^{lxi} It is even superior to the manifestation of, the expansion of, and the extension of the soul that is due to the mode of joy, which “bursts through the fence”⁶⁴⁷ and annuls all measure and limitation.^{lxii} For the effect of joy is that the soul and all its faculties be in a mode of extension. This may continue and affect even the bodily limbs, as far as the feet; this is the idea of dancing.^{lxiii}

All this, however, does not represent the revelation of the internality of the faculties.^{lxiv} This merely means that the faculties *as they are* are expressed expansively and extensively, to the extent that they are outwardly manifest as well, in the dancing of the feet. Whereas pleasure, although it, too, effects expansion and extension, as it is written ‘A good tiding fattens the bone,’⁶⁴⁸ yet this is no external expansion and extension. Thus we see empirically that when a person takes pleasure from some pleasurable thing, they do not move their body, as in dance or the like. On the contrary, one is at rest due to pleasure.^{lxv} Thus, the effect of expansion (“fattens the bone”) is not in a manner in which the faculties *as they are* become further expanded and extended. Rather, the *internality and essence* of the faculties are drawn out. This drawing out (of the internality and essence of the faculties) is then expressed in the faculties as they are as well.^{lxvi} Thus, pleasure reveals the internality and essence [of the soul] so that it have a tangible effect.

Analogously, above: The “pleasantness of *Havayah*,” the pleasure that derives from the divine name *Havayah*, which is based on the letter *yud*, “by the *yud* was the world-to-come created,” it the revelation of the supernal internality and essence.^{lxvii} However, in order for the revelation of the “pleasantness of *Havayah*” – the revelation of the supernal internality and essence – to be possible, there must first be the notion of *zimzum*, alluded to by the letter *yud* of the divine name *Havayah*. Then there can be the subsequent revelation of the internality and essence, which is the “pleasantness of *Havayah*” that is revealed in the world-to-come. Regarding this it is said that “by the *yud* was the world-to-come created.”

IV

The concept: At first, the Infinite Light filled the area of the void, and there was no possibility for existence at all.^{28lxviii} Although within [the Infinite Light], the limited light from which existence was subsequently brought into being was also comprised, nevertheless, being comprehended within the Infinite Light, it was not identifiable in its own right at all. There therefore had to be a *zimzum*^{lxix} and removal, through which there would be space for existence.

There is the well-known analogy for this to a master and a disciple. When the master wishes to bestow intellectual matter to a student who is not comparable to them at all, then, although the bestower certainly already possesses the intellectual material that is appropriate for the disciple as well, this intellectual matter is comprehended and nullified within the master’s own intellectual light which [the master] personally perceives.^{lxx} The intellect that is appropriate for the disciple is completely undifferentiated. Therefore, [the master] must remove their own intellectual light entirely. Only then can the intellectual light that is appropriate for the disciple/recipient be drawn down.

Furthermore, even after the light of intellect that is commensurate to the disciple’s [capacity] has been drawn down, that is still [a state of] the *master* drawing down that

⁶⁴⁷ *Sefer ha-ma’amarim* – 5657, 223 ff. And in several places.

⁶⁴⁸ Proverbs, 15:30. See b*Gittin*, 56b.

intellectual matter.^{lxxi} Thus, even after the intellectual light commensurate to the disciple has been drawn down, the master must now make an initial estimation of the disciple's intellectual capacity. Only after sizing up the recipient's capacity does [the master] then draw down from that intellectual kernel that is appropriate to the disciple as it exists within the master, drawing it below to the area of the recipient.^{lxxii}

Analogously above: The bringing into being of all existence and of the entire evolutionary system of the worlds^{lxxiii} – which bringing into being as a whole is via the divine name *HaVaYaH*, connoting “who was, is, and will be”⁶⁴⁹ – follows the sequence of the four letters of the divine name *HaVaYaH*. [It begins] with the *zimzum* alluded to by the letter *yud*, until [concluding] at the recipient's area alluded to by the final letter *hei*.^{lxxiv} For there must first of all be a constriction and removal through which the externality of the light can be individuated, meaning the limited light which allows for existence. This limited light was not identifiable earlier when the Infinite Light filled the space of the void. For although that is merely an Infinite *Light*, no more than light, but not the essence,^{lxxv} nevertheless its state as it is per se without any constrictions is of a kind with the essence, namely, infinite. It is only that being “the perfection of all,” hence “just as He has the capacity for infinity, so does He have the capacity for finitude.”^{650lxxvi} Nevertheless, the capacity for finitude is not individuated, since it is the capacity for infinitude that is manifest, the unlimited light.

For this reason the original *zimzum*, which is referred to as “removal,” was necessary.^{lxxvii} Through it the externality of the light was individuated and became apparent. This externality of the light was further constricted,^{lxxviii} so that the existence of worlds could become from it.

This means that the *zimzum* has two objectives. The first is that the light of limitation be distinguished from the light of infinity, and become apparent in its own right. Furthermore, the second objective: that the limited light itself (having become apparent in its own right) not be as prolific as it was prior to the *zimzum*. At that time the limited light was also of a kind with the essence; it therefore possessed an abundance of light.^{lxxix} The effect of the *zimzum* is that it should not have this abundance of light.^{lxxx}

This all is applicable to the Infinite *Light* alone. Being only light, but not the essence, both aforementioned properties obtain: the division of internal vs. external light (unlimited light vs. limited light), and the notion of *zimzum*, which obtains only to light but not to the luminary.^{lxxxii}

It is likewise with regard to the creation of the worlds.^{lxxxii} The original emergence of a desire for worlds was in the Infinite Light that preceded the *zimzum*. This desire also contained pleasure; as our Sages say regarding the verse ‘His thighs, pillars of marble’⁶⁵¹ – “‘His thighs (*shokav*)’ refer to the world, which the Holy One yearned (*nishtokek*) to create,”⁶⁵² which is the notion of pleasure.^{lxxxiii} Now, prior to the *zimzum* the [divine] pleasure possesses more amplitude and force. The bringing into being of existence cannot result from this.^{lxxxiv} Therefore, there had to be the notion of *zimzum*, where “he removed”^{lxxxv} his great light.” The effect of this was that even the light within which the desire and pleasure of worlds existed should be present (*es zol zikh oysstellen*)^{lxxxvi} as a mere iota of the essential desire and pleasure for the creation of the worlds, without the pre-*zimzum* amplitude and force.^{lxxxvii} This is referred to in general terms as

⁶⁴⁹ Zohar III, 257b (*Ra'aya mehemna*); *Pardes*, Gate 1 (*sha'ar eser ve-lo teshah*), ch. 9; *Tanya*, *Sha'ar ha-yihud ve-ha'emunah*, ch. 7 (82a).

⁶⁵⁰ *Avodat ha-kodesh*, Part I, ch. 8.

⁶⁵¹ Song of Songs, 5:15.

⁶⁵² Numbers *Rabbah*, beg. sec. 10.

the “point of *roshem* (trace).”^{653lxxxviii} This is the *yud* of the divine name *HaVaYaH*, no more than an iota.

From this miniscule point the revelation of the “line (*kav*)” extended, alluded to by the letter *vav* of the divine name *HaVaYaH*, indicating extension below. It is only that prior to this there must first be the first *hei*, which signifies an estimation of the capacity of the recipient as yet within the benefactor’s own self (hence sometimes referred to as the “area of *Adam kadmon* (primordial man)”⁴⁷).^{lxxxix} Then, after all this, comes the final *hei*, indicating the area of the recipient, the world of *atzilut* (emanation), lights within vessels.^{xc}

However, the above is true of the evolutionary system of the worlds [per se]. The desire for and pleasure from the worlds is in the state of *yud*, a miniscule point alone, the point of *roshem*. Subsequently, however, from the *yud* “the world-to-come is created.” The divine service of Israel through the observance of the Torah and its commandments (the *telos* of the entire creation, “*Be-reishit* (in the beginning) – for the sake of Israel, who are called “first (*reishit*),” and for the sake of the Torah, that is called “first””), however, engenders the creation of the world-to-come (the reward for their Torah study and divine service) from the *yud*. This means that the essential desire for and pleasure from the worlds, namely the “pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*,” is no longer in the state of a miniscule point alone, but is drawn out and revealed in a state of greater breadth and extension.^{xcii}

This explains why the [soul’s] descent below was to achieve the world-to-come.^{xcii} For the revelation of “the pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*” is exceedingly sublime, and surpasses the level the soul occupied prior to its descent. Pleasure is, after all, the revelation of the *internality and essence* as it is expressed in the utmost breadth and extension (as above regarding the human soul, and analogously above).^{xciii}

This, then, is the notion of the *yud* of the benefactor. Above there also exists the notion of “her self was diminished,” as it were, the notion of *zimzum* and removal, so that it is present as a miniscule point of *roshem*. In it are comprised all matters that they^{xciv} wish to bestow below upon the recipient. These [then] develop to the utmost of breadth and extension, the notion of the “world-to-come,” the “pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*.”

V

The master of the *hillula* continues in his discourse: This notion that “by the *yud* was the world-to-come created,” is drawn down and manifested via the *yud* of the Sefirah *yesod* [*So in the discourse* Bati le-gani – 5658 (Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5658, 212.)] (which has the same shape as the letter *yud*).⁶⁵⁴ Regarding this it is stated “For all that is in heaven and on earth.”⁶⁵⁵ The Targum has “that unites heaven and earth.”^{xcv} This is the Sefirah of *yesod*,⁶⁵⁶ from which *malkhut* receives. [The meaning of] “unites heaven and earth”: “heaven (*shamayim*)” [is] *esh* (fire) and *mayim* (water) (as stated in Midrash),⁶⁵⁷ [which are] the aspects of *hesed* (benevolence) and *gevurah* (severity) (the aspect of the [emotional] attributes). “Earth” is the aspect of *malkhut*. [The verse means] that through the Sefirah of *yesod*, *hesed* and *gevurah* are united with *malkhut*.^{xcvi}

⁶⁵³ See as well *Sefer ha-ma’amarim* – 5659, 77, and notes ad loc; places referenced there.

⁶⁵⁴ See Zohar I, 56a; III, 74b; and elsewhere.

⁶⁵⁵ I Chronicles, 29:11. See Zohar I, 31a; II, 116a; III, 257a; *Zohar hadash*, 103b; and elsewhere.

⁶⁵⁶ Zohar I, *ibid*; et passim.

⁶⁵⁷ *Genesis Rabbah*, 4:7.

This may be understood based on what was explained above (section II), that in the previous chapter of the discourse [my father-in-law] elucidates the notion of the *yod* and “her self was diminished” on the part of the recipient, through which they become a vessel capable of receiving, while in this chapter he explains the notion of the *yud* and “her self was diminished” above within the bestower. This is the notion of *zimzum*, through which all matters that it is wished to bestow below are made ready.

Now, however, in order for there to be actual bestowal, even once the (recipient’s) vessel is readied, and the endowment (on the part of the benefactor) is prepared, there must be the attachment (“that unites”) of benefactor and recipient together. This is accomplished via the Sefirah of *yesod*, which possesses two qualities.^{xcvii} The first, that the Sefirah of *malkhut* receives from it (indicating the readiness of the recipient’s vessel and the preparedness of the bestower’s light). Second, it “unites heaven and earth,” attaching bestower and recipient.^{xcviii}

This may be understood based on the Alter Rebbe’s^{xcix} [*Addenda to Torah ohr, beg. Va-yehi (105a, ff).*] explanation interpreting the verse “Joseph is a fruitful son; a fruitful son upon the eye.”⁶⁵⁸ [He asks:] Why are [the words] “a fruitful son etc. a fruitful son” repeated (twice)? Also, what is the meaning of “upon the eye?”

[The Alter Rebbe] explains this⁶⁵⁹: The significance of Joseph, “the righteous is the foundation of the world,”^{660c} is [that he embodies] the Sefirah of *yesod*.^{ci} Regarding this it was stated that “*yesod* is the culmination of the torso,”⁶⁶¹ as well as that “body and covenant are considered one.”⁶⁶² It would seem that these are two contradictory notions. For at first it is stated that *yesod* is merely the *conclusion* of the torso, while subsequently he adds that “body and covenant are *considered one*.”

The Alter Rebbe explains that the Sefirah of *yesod* reaches the loftiest heights, to the ultimate elevation.^{cii} This is evident from the physical person,^{ciii} for “there is no [involuntary] erection without awareness.”^{663civ} This indicates the attachment and bond between the member and the brain in the head, more so than with any other bodily limb. With regard to other limbs, even if one should fantasize lustfully, one’s hand or foot will not become excited. Hence it is understood that *yesod* reaches the loftiest heights etc. Likewise with regard to the *hamshakhah* from above downward:^{cv} it is like the drawing of the seminal drop, which is drawn from the choicest aspect of the brain,⁶⁶⁴ and arrives at the nethermost level, the conclusion of the torso.^{cvi}

These two aspects (the elevation and drawing down within the Sefirah of *yesod*) similarly exist in the divine service of the “righteous who is the foundation of the world.” For: there are varying levels within the divine service of the righteous. There are righteous individuals whose attachment (*devekut*) [to the divine] is in a state of utter divestment from physicality, with true and absolute self-sacrifice, etc. Then there are righteous individuals who do not have such true self-sacrifice as the former, yet they are more exceedingly lofty than these etc. This is exemplified in the distinction between R. Yohanan ben Zakkai and R. Hanina ben Dosa: the

⁶⁵⁸ Genesis, 49:22.

⁶⁵⁹ *Torah ohr*, *ibid*, 3, ff.

⁶⁶⁰ Proverbs, 10:25. See *Zohar I*, 59b.

⁶⁶¹ Introduction to *Tikkunei zohar* – “*Patah eliyahu*” (17a).

⁶⁶² *Zohar III*, 223b; 236a; 279a; 283a; and elsewhere.

⁶⁶³ *bYevamot*, 53b.

⁶⁶⁴ See Tanya, *Kuntres aharon*, 157a; *Ma’amarei admur ha-zaken* – 5568, vol. 1, 283; *Bi’urei ha-zohar of admur ha-emza’i*, *Balak*, 106a; *Bi’urei ha-zohar of zemah zedek*, vol. 2, 613 ff.; *Ohr ha-torah*, *Beha’alotekha*, 426; and elsewhere.

latter was like a servant before the king, while the former was like a minister before the king.⁶⁶⁵ Although the self-sacrifice of [R. Hanina b. Dosa] was more sincere, the root of his soul and the [capacity of] his apprehension did not reach as lofty a level as [R. Yohanan b. Zakkai]. The one was of the aspect of *hesed*, while the other was of the aspect of *hokhmah*.^{cvii}

However, when even the self-sacrifice of (those righteous individuals whose level is) that of *hokhmah* is more sincere and loftier than the self-sacrifice of (those righteous individuals whose level is) that of *hesed*, the greatness of its quality is inestimable. A stir possessing both qualities is engendered up above. For one thing, it is at a higher level, and secondly, it possesses additional light (as it is drawn down below).

This is the quality of Joseph the Saint (*Yosef ha-zaddik*).^{cviii} He was the “righteous who is the foundation of the world,” possessing both above-mentioned aspects. The root of his soul was loftier, and moreover, his self-sacrifice below was at the peak of perfection.^{cxix} He therefore reached the loftiest of heights above, and thence was drawn down an exceedingly abundant light.

This is [the meaning of] “Joseph is a fruitful son; a fruitful son upon the eye.” The repetition is meant to allude to the two above-mentioned types of attachment (from above downward, and from below upward). For “fruitful” (*porat*) is related to reproduction (*periyah u-reviah*), which is the notion of an attachment from above downward (*hamshakhah*), generating souls and angels.^{cx} [Scripture] then explains the reason why Joseph is “a fruitful son”: because he is “a fruitful son upon the eye (*ayin*).” He increases the depth of attachment from below ever higher and higher. This is [the meaning of] “upon the eye”: beyond the large [letter] *ayin* (as explained at length there).^{cxix}

This accords also with what the Maggid says elsewhere, that “*yesod* has the potential to rise until *da'at* and to cause influence to radiate from the brain etc.”^{cxii} It is he that binds all, as it is written, ‘For all that is in heaven and on earth etc.’ ‘It unites heaven and earth etc.’ Through him they are joined, for he is the *zaddik* etc. ‘the righteous who is the foundation of the world.’^{cxiii} In this manner he brings the influence to the world of *Asiyah* etc. for it can only arrive in the world of *Asiyah* via the *tsaddiq* who is in the world of *Asiyah* etc.^{cxiv} Understand this.”⁶⁶⁶

This may be related to the above-mentioned teaching of the Maggid (sec. II), containing the parable of the father who constricts his intellect for the sake of his young son. The analogue is that the *zimzum* is for the sake of Israel, so that Israel be righteous.^{cxv} This notion is connected with “the righteous is the foundation of the world” mentioned above, through which all supernal matters are drawn down.

Thus [my father-in-law] concludes the third aspect of the *yud*. It indicates the Sephirah *yesod*, the culmination of the torso, that which “unites heaven and earth,” uniting bestower and recipient. This means that once there is the recipient’s submission (*bitul*) (the first aspect of the *yud*), and the benefactor’s submission (the second aspect of the *yud*), the third aspect of the *yud* is present which joins benefactor and recipient. This means that all “letters,” all *hamshakhot* from above, will be drawn down and will ultimately be implanted^{cxvi} below within the recipient.^{cxvii}

VI

[My father-in-law] continues the discourse: All the above applies to the letter *yud*, of the side of the holy realm. It is otherwise with the side of the opposite, [namely] the letter *resh*.

⁶⁶⁵ bBerakhot, 34b.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ohr torah*, sec. 95; sec. 97. See also *ibid*, sec. 15.

Regarding this it is said ‘While the pauper (*rash*) has nothing (*ayn kol*).’⁶⁶⁷ They have no *kol*, ‘all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth,’ ‘that unites heaven and earth.’ This means, they lack the Sephirah of *yesod* which conjoins. It is for this reason that they literally “have nothing” (*bei im iz kayn zakh nito*).^{cxviii} This is the reverse of what is written regarding Jacob (representing the notion of the holy realm as a whole), “I have all.”^{668cxix}

[My father-in-law] adds another matter in this regard: that the letter *dalet* also relates to speech (*dibbur*).^{cxix} Therefore, the letter *dalet* is of the side of the holy realm, for it indicates the revelation of the “word of *HaVaYaH*,” through which the creation and sustention of all existence is achieved (“By the word of *HaVaYaH* were the heavens fashioned etc.”⁶⁶⁹).^{cxxi} It is otherwise under the impact of the “opposite side,” and particularly when the opposite side gains strength: this effects the utter concealment and occlusion of the [divine] speech within the holy realm as well, as it is written, “I have become mute, still; I have become silent etc.”^{670cxii}

We may understand, through a comprehensive explanation, the connection and relation (between the concealment and occlusion of the [divine] speech to the notion of “the pauper has no *kol*”) from its antithesis at the opposite extreme as it will be in the future time-to-come,^{cxiii} when the *zimzum* will be rectified. Now regarding the future time-to-come it is written, “Then the glory of *HaVaYaH* will be revealed, and all flesh will behold together that it was the mouth of *HaVaYaH* that had spoken.”⁶⁷¹ There is the well-known observation about this: The creation of the world through [G-d’s] speech, may he be blessed, via ten utterances, was expressly from the divine name *Elokim* (“and *Elokim* said”⁶⁷²).^{cxiv} Why does it say “[they] will see etc. that the mouth of *HaVaYaH* spoke?”

So the matter is as the Mitteler Rebbe^{cxv} explains [*Torat hayim, vol. 2, 964 (in the new edition – Tetzaveh, 328d, ff.)*] regarding the verse “Praise *HaVaYaH* from the heavens, praise him in the heights, etc. Praise *HaVaYaH* from the earth, etc. beasts and all animals etc.”⁶⁷³ All the diversity of creation in heaven and on earth, until the lowest points, praise the name *HaVaYaH*. It is seemingly problematic: how is it conceivable that creations that became via the divine name *Elokim* should praise the divine name *HaVaYaH*? It is well with regard to the proclamation of “Holy, holy, holy is *HaVaYaH*”⁶⁷⁴ (which connotes separateness⁶⁷⁵).^{cxvi} This is feasible for creations that became via the ten utterances of the divine name *Elokim* as well, since it is possible to arrive at the realization that “holy is *HaVaYaH*,” that *HaVaYaH* is holy and apart, from the divine name *Elokim* as well. However, when it is said of all the individual creations “**praise *HaVaYaH***” (to the extent that it is written even of the peoples of the world “Praise *HaVaYaH*, all you nations”⁶⁷⁶),^{cxvii} it is problematic: how can the divine name *HaVaYaH* be praised by creations whose existence became via the divine name *Elokim*?

[The Mitteler Rebbe] explains [this matter] at length, based on what is written, “Know you this day, and take to your heart, that *HaVaYaH* is the *Elokim*.”⁶⁷⁷ The Zohar states that

⁶⁶⁷ II Samuel, 12:3.

⁶⁶⁸ Genesis, 33:11.

⁶⁶⁹ Psalms, 33:6.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 39:3.

⁶⁷¹ Isaiah, 40:5.

⁶⁷² Genesis, 1:3; and elsewhere. See Zohar III, 216b; and elsewhere.

⁶⁷³ Psalms, 148:1 ff.

⁶⁷⁴ Isaiah, 6:3.

⁶⁷⁵ *Likkutei torah, Emor*, 31a; and in various places.

⁶⁷⁶ Psalms, 117:1.

⁶⁷⁷ Deuteronomy, 4:39.

“*HaVaYaH* and *Elokim* are entirely one, for this is the fundament of all.”⁶⁷⁸ Therefore, the becoming of the creations via the divine name *Elokim* is also in a mode in which *HaVaYaH* and *Elokim* are all one.^{cxxviii} It is only that the divine name *Elokim* is like a shield and sheath for the divine name *HaVaYaH*, as it is written “For as the sun and a shield is *HaVaYaH Elokim*.”^{679cxxxix} Yet, being a shield and sheath of the holy realm,^{cxxx} it, too, can facilitate that all creations be capable of “praising *HaVaYaH*,” to the extent that (even) “praise *HaVaYaH* all you nations.”

However, this all applies at the present time. It is only via the ten utterances of the divine name *Elokim* that we may reach the divine name *HaVaYaH*; it follows that [we now have access] only to “the sun of *HaVaYaH*” as it is within the shield and sheath of the divine name *Elokim*. But in the future time-to-come, there will be the novel development that “The glory of *HaVaYaH* will be revealed, and all flesh will behold together that the mouth of *HaVaYaH* has spoken.”^{cxxxix} For “The Holy One, blessed be He, will remove the sun from its sheath.”^{680cxxxii} The “sun of *HaVaYaH*” will emerge from the shield and sheath that is the divine name *Elokim*, and then we will behold the revelation of the divine name *HaVaYaH* as it is on its own, “that the mouth of *HaVaYaH* has spoken.”

This revelation will be accessible to all creations, as it is written, “all flesh will behold.” This means that not only souls and angels, but “all flesh,” even the terrestrial beasts and animals, will recognize that “the mouth of *HaVaYaH* has spoken.” This aligns with what is written (regarding the cows that carried the Ark) “And the cows walked true,”^{681cxxxiii} “They sang a song. What song did they say? etc.”⁶⁸² “Sing to *HaVaYaH* a new song.”⁶⁸³ This refers to the song of the future time-to-come. Thus the Midrash states that the song of the future time to come, when there will be a redemption following which there will be no exile, will be in the masculine form, “Sing to *HaVaYaH* a new song (*shir hadash*).”^{684cxxxiv} Now the revelation of the future time-to-come will be in a manner of “all flesh will behold,” including beasts and animals, “that the mouth of *HaVaYaH* has spoken.” [G-d’s] speech, may he be blessed, will be utterly manifest.

It is otherwise now, during the time of exile, when the precise opposite [holds true]:^{cxxxv} The divine speech is utterly concealed and occluded; as it is written, “I have become mute, still, I have been silent etc.” “I have become mute,” is related to *ilem* (a mute), which is the reverse of speech.^{cxxxvi}

Thus the *Zemah Zedek*^{cxxxvii} explains [See *Reshimot le-eikhah*, 19 (*Ohr ha-torah – Nakh*, vol. 2, 1048). *Ohr ha-torah*, *Bereishit*, 51a. *Reshimot le-tehillim (Yahel ohr)*, on verse 39:3 (146 ff.).] that this is also the reason why it is written regarding the period of exile, “As a ewe who has become muted before her shearers,”⁶⁸⁵ which is the opposite of the notion of speech. He explains [the significance] of writing “as a ewe who has become muted before **her shearers**” – precisely. “Ewe” represents *Knesset Israel* (the Community of Israel),⁶⁸⁶ the Sephirah of *malkhut*.^{cxxxviii} During the period of exile, when there are “her shearers” that shear her hairs, she is “become muted.”^{cxxxix} The notion of the speech of the ten utterances is in a state of silence and stillness.

⁶⁷⁸ I, 12a; II, 26b; 161a; III, 143a; 264a; and elsewhere.

⁶⁷⁹ Psalms, 84:12. See *Tanya*, *Sha’ar ha-yihud ve-ha’emunah*, ch. 4; and elsewhere.

⁶⁸⁰ *bNedarim*, 8b.

⁶⁸¹ I Samuel, 6:12.

⁶⁸² Psalms, 98:1.

⁶⁸³ *bAvodah Zarah*, 24b; *Zohar II*, 137b, ff.

⁶⁸⁴ *Tanhuma*, *Beshalah*, 10; and elsewhere.

⁶⁸⁵ Isaiah, 53:7.

⁶⁸⁶ *Zohar II*, 29b; *Tanya*, ch. 45 (64b); and in various places.

Then vitality is drawn down via garments and hairs, which occlude the notion of speech [*Likkutei torah, Mass'ei, 88c.*].

Thus the master of the *hillula* elucidates further on in this chapter, that the light and vitality which energizes the Other Side (*sitra ahara*) is a radiance of a radiance, the externality of the external,^{cxl} and it is present in utter concealment – and the analogy for this is to compare it to hair. The vitality in [hair] is not manifest, for which reason no pain is felt when hair is shorn. This is because the vitality within [the hair] is in the ultimate constriction, and is merely an externality of the external [vitality]. This is due to being drawn [into the hair] through the interruption and constriction presented by the skull bone.^{cxli} This is why [*malkhut*] is referred to as “become muted,” the reverse of the notion of speech.^{cxlii}

The Zemah Zedek explains that this [relates] as well to the verse “I have been mute, still, I have been silent.” It is written in *Reishit hokhmah* that [the words] *ne’elamti dumiyah hehesheiti* (“I have been mute etc.”) form the acrostic *niddah*.^{687cxliii} {*Niddah* refers to the period of exile in its entirety, when “Jerusalem etc. became a *niddah*”⁶⁸⁸; and “From Jerusalem’s destruction, Tyre was completed.”⁶⁸⁹}^{cxliv} *Niddah* contains the letters *nad hei*^{cxlv} (the *hei* has wandered).⁶⁹⁰ This means that the latter *hei* of the divine name has become distanced from the letter *vav*.^{cxlvi} This means that the latter *hei* of the divine name *HaVaYaH*, the Sefirah *malkhut*, the aspect of speech, wanders and moves away from the letter *vav*, signifying the *hamshakhah* from above.^{cxlvii} In this manner, speech is concealed and occluded. Thus the Zohar states, “because they were separated (the *hei* from the *vav*) etc. ‘I have been mute, still,’ because the *vav* departed from the *hei* etc. speech has been muted⁶⁹¹ [And therefore, in the future time to come there will be precisely a “great voice,” and “the voice of the bride.”^{692cxlviii} And in Midrash tehilim on the verse “G-d frees the bound”^{693cxlix} it states that in the future time-to-come the Holy One, blessed be he, will allow the prohibitions of *niddah*.⁶⁹⁴].”

From this it is understood that the notion of “I have been mute, still, I have been silent,” forming the acrostic of *niddah*, the “wandering of the *hei*” from the *vav*, is the reverse of the notion of *kol*, the Sefirah *yesod*, which “unites heaven and earth.” It joins the *vav* (heaven, *ze’eir anpin*)^{cli} to the *hei* (earth, *malkhut*). This is also the [content] of the notion of “the pauper (*rash*) hasn’t *kol*.” Due to the lack of *kol* which “unites heaven and earth,” meaning that the emotional Sefirot,^{cli} the letter *vav*, are not drawn into *malkhut*, the letter *hei*, which is the “wandering of the *hei*” from the *vav*, there then develops the notion of paucity (*resh*) and poverty.^{clii}

VII

[My father-in-law] continues in the discourse: This relates to Jacob’s statement, “*yesh li kol* (I have all [I need]),” while Esau said “*yesh li rav* (I have much).”⁶⁹⁵ The aspect of *kol*, which

⁶⁸⁷ *Sha’ar ha-kedushah*, ch. 17 (s.v. *Gam zariikh lizaher*).

⁶⁸⁸ Lamentations, 1:8.

⁶⁸⁹ Rashi on Genesis, 25:23.

⁶⁹⁰ R. Moshe Zacuto (cited in *Nizuzei orot*) on Zohar II, 3b.

⁶⁹¹ I, 116b; and elsewhere.

⁶⁹² See *Torah ohr*, end portion *Va-yigash* (45b); elucidated in *Likkutei sihot*, vol. 35, 197.

⁶⁹³ Psalms, 146:7.

⁶⁹⁴ See *Ohr ha-torah, Bereishit*, in fn7.

⁶⁹⁵ Genesis, 33:9.

“unites heaven and earth,” is specifically in the holy realm. However for Esau, who is *kelipah* and the Other Side, there is no *kol* that joins; there is only “(I have) much.”

The idea here: *rav* (much) indicates the notion of multiplicity and diversity,^{cliii} which is the reverse of unity (“which unites”) [characteristic] of the holy realm. Thus the Midrash states⁶⁹⁶: “Regarding Esau it is written six souls, yet it is written about that, many “souls”^{cliv} [in the plural] (similar to “I have much”); as it is written, ‘Esau took etc. the souls of his household.’⁶⁹⁷ Whereas regarding Jacob there were seventy souls, yet it is written about that [in the singular, implying] a single “soul”^{clv}; as it is written, ‘All the soul(s) that emerged from Jacob’s loins were etc.’^{698clvi}

[My father-in-law] continues to explain that when Esau said “I have much,” this does not contradict the aforementioned, that “The pauper has nothing.” [This he explains] based on the statement of the Master of the Academy (in the Zohar): “The one who is minor, he is great (*rav*); and the one who is great, he is minor.”⁶⁹⁹ In the holy realm, where “he is minor,” “her self was diminished,” as it is written, ‘Will Jacob rise? For he is small,’⁷⁰⁰ it is through this that “he is great.”^{clvii} For through *bitul*, one receives all bestowals from above, up to the revelation of “By the *yud* was the world-to-come created,” the aspect of “to gaze at the pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*” (as above, ch. III).^{clviii}

Whereas on the opposite side, “The one who is great,” being in [a state of] aggrandizement^{clix} (the reverse of *bitul*), the influence received is merely the externality of the external. Therefore, “he is minor,” which is the notion of diminishment. This is because one has no more than material endowment alone. Now the physical per se, even when it is abundant, “I have much,” is completely insignificant, “he is minor.”^{clx}

Furthermore, the abundance of materiality (“I have much”) itself results in one’s being diminished and small. This can be understood as it is in [the area of] divine service as well. As the Rebbe Maharash^{clxi} [*Hemshekh Mayim rabim – 5636, at its beginning.*] explains at length the meaning of the verse ‘A man’s folly corrupts his way, and his heart is wroth against G-d.’⁷⁰¹ We see that by the nature of the world, that which is more vital for a person, is more readily available without strain. For example, air, which is a constant necessity for a person, is omnipresent and requires no effort to obtain. Food and drink which are not as regularly necessary as air, are not as available as air. Among [food and drink] themselves, beverages, which are more vital, are more common and are cheaper, while food, which is not as vital, is more expensive. Clothing, which are not as essential (for one can live without them as well), are more costly; to the point that housing, which is even less necessary etc. costs even more dearly, and comes through much toil and effort etc. How much more so [is this true of] matters that are complete luxuries.

However, there are those people who will sacrifice and endanger themselves for extravagances, something that is counter even to common sense.^{clxii} Regarding this it is said, ‘A man’s folly corrupts his way.’ This behavior, a behavior of folly and nonsense wherein one pursues luxuries, “corrupts his way.” Not only does one not achieve one’s goal, but to the contrary, through this one is diminished; for one becomes distracted, lacking peace of mind, and

⁶⁹⁶ Lev. Rabbah, 4:6; cited in Rashi on Genesis, 46:26.

⁶⁹⁷ Genesis, 36:6.

⁶⁹⁸ Exodus, 1:5.

⁶⁹⁹ I, 122b; III, 168a.

⁷⁰⁰ Amos, 7:2; 7:5.

⁷⁰¹ Proverbs, 19:3

in this way one loses even those material matters that one requires. Thus “the one who is great, he is minor”; the very abundance of materiality itself results in becoming diminished.

[The Rebbe Maharash] continues there: This is the meaning of the statement “Many are the needs of Your people, but their minds are inadequate.”^{702clxiii} The very basis for the “many needs of Your people,” their pursuit of luxuries, is due to “their minds [being] inadequate” (the notion of ‘a man’s folly’).^{clxiv} [They fail] to grasp that it is through the pursuit of luxuries that one loses even matters that are essential.

He further interprets this on a deeper level^{clxv}: The primary meaning of “their minds are inadequate” refers to one’s profound contemplation^{clxvi} in a manner of bonding⁷⁰³ [along the lines of what was explained above (ch. V) regarding “*yesod* is the culmination of the torso,” for “body and covenant are considered one”]. For if one were to profoundly contemplate divinity, so that one would know that ‘G-d your L-rd, He is the one who gives you ability to achieve success,’⁷⁰⁴ one would not seek strategies [to amass wealth, e.g.] wandering to the ends of the earth, when one believes and knows ([i.e.] true knowledge, in a manner of bonding, such that it penetrates all of one’s faculties) that which is written, ‘And G-d your L-rd will bless you in all that you do.’⁷⁰⁵ For [G-d] can bless one in all that one does in one’s own place, without journeying to a place of danger, and without strategies and artifices etc.

Thus the reason that “the needs of Your people are many” is due to “their minds are inadequate.” This means a lack of *da’at* (knowledge) and attachment to the notion that “G-d your L-rd will bless you in all that you do.” From this there develops the state of ‘A man’s folly corrupts his way,’ where one seeks stratagems etc. As a consequence, the bestowal arrives in a perverse manner as well (*dos geyt mit a krumkayt*).^{clxvii} Instead of “great” (an abundance of materiality), one becomes “minor,” as above [Note the notion of “half of one’s desire in hand” that was explained in *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – Kayitz 5700, 153.*].

VIII

Now the Master of the *hillula* continues in his discourse: The influence [directed] to the *qelipah* and the Other Side is in a manner in which that very [bestowal] serves to heighten their ego. This is akin to Pharaoh, who said ‘My river is my own, and I made myself [great].’⁷⁰⁶ Now this is precisely the opposite of the truth. For the truth is that [Pharaoh] was blessed by Jacob’s blessing, as it is written, ‘And Jacob blessed Pharaoh’ – “He blessed him that the Nile surge at his arrival.”⁷⁰⁷ However, *par’oh* (Pharaoh) consists of the same letters as *ha-’oreph* (the nape of the neck)⁷⁰⁸; he would even deny and was ungrateful, saying “my river is my own, and I made myself [great].” Thus it was due to the [divine] influence that his ego was heightened.

The idea here: despite the presence of abundant endowment (“I have much”), this endowment is merely an externality of the external.^{clxviii} There can therefore exist those that

⁷⁰² *Piyyut* for the *selihot* of the eve of Rosh Hashanah and of the Ne’ilah prayer. Study also *Berakhot*, 29b.

⁷⁰³ See Tanya, end ch. 3; ch. 42 (59b); and elsewhere.

⁷⁰⁴ Deuteronomy, 8:18.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, 15:18.

⁷⁰⁶ The discourse as printed has “The river (*ye’or*) (without the [possessive] *yud* [= “my”]) is my own, and I have made myself.” It would seem that it should be as we have it here (and so it is at the chapter’s end), and as is the phraseology in the verse at Ezekiel, 29:3. See the phraseology transcribed in Tanya, ch. 22 (28a), and in *he’aroth we-tiqnim*, ibid (and see *Iggaroth qodesh*, vol. 3, 290).

⁷⁰⁷ Genesis, 47:10; and Rashi, ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ *Liquttei torah* of R. Isaac Luria, *Wa-yeishev*, 40a; ibid, beg. *Shemoth*; and elsewhere.

“shear her” (merely the “hairs”), and hence “she is silent.”^{clxix} It was thus regarding Pharaoh, rearranged as *ha-oreph*; he was ungrateful, and entirely denied [the divine benevolence] by saying “my river is my own, and I made myself [great].”^{clxx} As a result of this, the notion of ‘The pauper has nothing’ develops; one has no spiritual beneficence, while even the material beneficence, being merely an externality of the external, has no long-term sustention, as it is untrue.^{709clxxi}

To understand the above: True, the *kelipot* receive an influence that is merely an externality of the external; however, even this influence is of the holy realm. How is it possible that such [endowment] should serve to inflate their ego, so that they claim “my river is mine, and I made myself [great]?”^{clxxii}

This may be understood based on the elucidation of the Rebbe (Mehorashab), *nishmato eden*,^{clxxiii} [*Quntres u-ma'ayan, Discourse III (p. 68).*] [to the effect] that the reason the Other Side inflates its own [self-importance], saying “my river is my own, and I made myself [great],” is due to the light of the holy realm not radiating manifestly within them. It is rather present within them in a state of exile.^{clxxiv}

For: when the influence and *hamshakhah* from above extends to the holy side, as it is when it extends to the Jewish people, [it is one way]. They are inherently apposite vessels for divinity, a vessel (sic) that is disposed and ready to receive the *hamshakhah* from above. This is by dint of *bitul*, as is explained in *Tanya* that “supernal holiness dwells only upon that which is abnegated to [G-d], may he be blessed.”⁷¹⁰ Therefore, the divine light is manifest within them and unites with them.^{clxxv}

It is otherwise on the opposite side. They are inherently not [appropriate] receptacles for divinity at all – being in a state of separation. It is written, ‘Which G-d your L-rd has apportioned (*halak*) to all the nations,’⁷¹¹ [i.e.] he detached them from his own unity,⁷¹² which is the reverse of *bitul*.^{clxxvi} Therefore, the light of the holy realm does not garb itself and unite with them; it is present within them in a state of exile.

This is akin to the distinction between the way a human soul is garbed within one’s body, and the notion of *gilgulim* (reincarnation).^{clxxvii} The investiture of the soul in the body is comparable to the investiture of light in vessel (the light affects the vessel, and the vessel the light), because the body is a receptacle that is primed and predisposed to integrate the soul. This means that the bodily material is in proportion to the soul’s form.^{clxxviii} Therefore the body affects the soul, and the soul affects the body, to the extent that they unite completely. Whereas with regard to reincarnation, when a human soul is reincarnated in the body of an animal. Then there is no change effected in the animal, to the extent that [the soul’s presence] is not apparent whatsoever.^{clxxix} This is because [the animal body] is in no way predisposed or primed to integrate the soul that has been incarnated within it. An analogy may be drawn from a person tied up in a sack; they have no effect on the sack.^{clxxx}

Analogously with regard to the influence extended to the *qelipah* and the Other Side: even the constricted endowment, the externality of the external, which is introduced internally, is not like the garbing of light in vessel (since inherently, *qelipah* and the Other Side are not an apposite vessel(sic)). Rather, [the influence] is present in a state of exile. For this reason, not only does the bestowal from the holy realm not effect any notion of abnegation; on the contrary,

⁷⁰⁹ See *Liquettei torah*, portion *Zaw*, 12d; *Quntres u-ma'ayan*, Discourse XIV, ch. 4 (p. 80).

⁷¹⁰ Ch. 6.

⁷¹¹ Deuteronomy, 4:19.

⁷¹² See *Ma'amarei admur ha-zaqen* – 5571, 173; *Torath hayyim*, portion *No'ah*, 75c.

in this way *qelipah* temporarily acquires additional potency, its ego being bolstered, so that it says “my river is my own, and I made myself.”^{clxxxix}

IX

The general principle of this matter: The side of the opposite lacks the central notion, which is the *biṭul* of “her self was diminished.” For in the absence of the *biṭul* of “her self was diminished” on the side of the recipient, the benefactor too lacks the self-constriction [necessary] for the *hamshakhah*. As a result the situation of “the pauper (*rash*) has no-thing (*kol*)” obtains.^{clxxxii}

It is for this^{clxxxiii} that there must be the overall divine service of the Jewish people {“The righteous is the foundation of the world,”^{clxxxiv} the son for whom the supernal *tsimtsum* is enacted in a manner that enables the drawing down of all [divine] matters below^{clxxxv} (as in the well-known interpretation⁷¹³ of “he rolls away light from before darkness, and darkness from before light”⁷¹⁴),^{clxxxvi} and as discussed above (sec. V) regarding “Joseph is a fruitful son, a fruitful son upon the eye”}. This [divine service] is pointed to by the Tabernacle and the Temple, beginning with the boards [*qeresh*] of the Tabernacle – that even the *resh* should gain a *yod* from behind, meaning the *biṭul* of “her self was diminished.”^{clxxxvii} In this way [the *resh-cum-dalet*] becomes a vessel that is readied to receive from the *yod*, “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created,” the disclosure of “the pleasantness of *HaWaYaH*,” via the aspect of *yeśod* which “unites heaven and earth.”^{clxxxviii}

All this is accomplished through the divine service of the Jewish people of performing the Torah and its commandments throughout the “six thousand years of the world’s existence.” Particularly in the [epoch of] the “heels of the messiah,”^{clxxxix} when divine service is in a manner of great [distress,] “out of the straits,” it is through ‘out of the straits have I called out to *Ya-H*’⁷¹⁵ that the *hamshakhah* is in a much superior manner.^{cx} It is through this that we effect the disclosure of the future time-to-come, [when] “the glory of *HaWaYaH* will be revealed etc.,” “will be revealed” – precisely. This means that the matter itself already exists (*der inyan iz shoynd*), it is merely obscured; the novel element of the future time-to-come is only in this regard, that the matter will be revealed,^{cxci} to the extent that “all flesh will see,” even animals and beasts (as above).

This will be quickly in our [experience],^{cxcii} literally speedily, as has been said, “And the glory of *HaWaYaH* will be revealed, and all flesh together will see that the mouth of *HaWaYaH* spoke.”^{cxci}

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⁷¹³ See *Ma’amare admur ha-zagen – inyanim*, 317; *Torath hayyim – tetsaweh*, 464b (318c); *Sha’are orah*, discourse *Be-koph he be-kislew*, ch. 57; *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5659*, 78; *Hemshekh te’erav*, vol. I, 654; *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5678*, 378; discourse *Wa-yiqah hawayah elo-him – 5695*, ch. 29; *Sefer ha-siḥoth – 5691*, 260; and in places cited there.

⁷¹⁴ Liturgy of the evening prayer.

⁷¹⁵ Psalms, 118:5. See *Sefer ha-ma’amarim – 5671*, 1.

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^{cxiv} I⁷¹⁶ have come to my garden, my sister, the bride.⁷¹⁷ My father-in-law, the Rebbe, master of [today's] *yortsayt*^{cxv} and *hillula*, cites in this regard in his famous discourse [published] for 10 Shevat, 5710, the Midrash Rabbah⁷¹⁸ which states:

As is known^{cxvi} that in *midrash*^{cxvii} and *aggada*^{cxviii} “a multitude of mysteries^{cxix} of the Torah are secreted,” as well as [instruction regarding] fine modes of conduct, as stated in *Iggeret ha-qodesh*⁷¹⁹ with regard to the aggadic material contained in the book of *En ya'aqov*,^{cc} and it is similar with regard to other *midrashim*.^{cci}

“*le-gan* (to the garden) is not written here; rather, *le-ganni* (to my garden), [glossed as] *le-ginnuni* (to my matrimonial canopy), to the place my primary presence [namely, his primary dwelling^{ccii}] originally was, for [at the time of the world's creation] the primary *shekhinah* was below.” Then, through the subsequent undesirable matters, the *shekhinah* departed from the earth to the firmament, until it [eventually] departed to the seventh firmament.

Subsequently seven saints arose who brought the *shekhinah* down below, beginning with Abraham our forefather, who brought the *shekhinah* down from the seventh firmament to the sixth. Ultimately, Moses, who was seventh, and “all sevenths are beloved,”⁷²⁰ brought it down to the earth.

This is [the model for] the service of the righteous overall, ‘your nation is entirely righteous,’⁷²¹ to draw the *shekhinah* down below. Thus it is written, ‘the righteous will inherit the land, and they will dwell eternally upon it.’^{722cciii} The service of the righteous is to “dwell” – to cause to dwell, “eternally” – the *shekhinah*, the aspect of “he who dwells eternally, in heaven, and hallowed,”⁷²³ “upon it” – below upon the earth.^{cciv}

The drawing of the *shekhinah* down below by Moses was via the construction of the Tabernacle.

The process of drawing down began at the time of the giving of the Torah, but it was primarily and overtly accomplished by the construction of the Tabernacle.^{ccv}

* [This discourse] was published at the time [dated] “15 Shevat, 5737.”

“The discourse was delivered twice – at the *farbrenge*n of the Sabbath day of 10 Shevat, and at the departure of the Sabbath [Saturday night] – with modifications and additions. We herewith publish the discourse which was recited with greater publicity as the base [discourse] – that of the *farbrenge*n of Saturday night, while the additions of the [discourse of the] Sabbath day are inserted as notes (*in my translation, they are placed between bold type brackets and in separate paragraphs, interpolated within the base text – ed.*). References – for both the discourse's base text as well as the additional notes – are in the footnotes.”

⁷¹⁶ This discourse is **primarily** based on the seventh chapter [*the chapter that relates to this year – see Torat menahem – sefer ha-ma'amarim bati le-ganni, vol. 1, vi; see citations there*] of the *hemshekh* “*Bati le-ganni – 5710.*”

⁷¹⁷ Song of Songs, 5:1.

⁷¹⁸ On Song of Songs, ad loc.

⁷¹⁹ Epistle 23.

⁷²⁰ Lev. Rabbah, 29:11.

⁷²¹ Isaiah, 60:21.

⁷²² Psalms, 37:29.

⁷²³ Based on the liturgy – morning service of the Sabbath and festivals. In Song Rabbah ad loc: “who dwells eternally, holy is his name” (Isaiah, 57:15).

[The Tabernacle's] significance was, as it says, 'Let them make me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.'⁷²⁴ In and through [the Sanctuary] the *shekhinah* would be drawn down.

There is an everlasting lesson regarding the Tabernacle.^{ccvi} For "all of Moses' handiwork is eternal,"⁷²⁵ and therefore the Tabernacle which Moses constructed is eternal as well.

From this we understand that [in addition to the entire Torah – which also includes the narrative about Moses' handiwork – being eternal,⁷²⁶ indeed] the notion of the Tabernacle itself represents an eternal lesson, at every time, in every place, for each and every Jew – regarding whom it is said,^{ccvii} 'Remember the Torah of my servant Moses,'⁷²⁷ and 'The Torah which Moses commanded us is a heritage for the congregation of Jacob.'⁷²⁸

Now the beginning of the Tabernacle's [construction] was with the panels,⁷²⁹ which were made of acacia wood (*shittim*); as it says, 'Make the panels for the Tabernacle of upright acacia wood.'⁷³⁰ The idea here is [as is explained in the discourse, there,⁷³¹ based on the Talmud⁷³² and the Midrash⁷³³] that *shittim* is [etymologically] related to *sheṭut* (insanity). This refers to the "insanity of the opposite side," as our sages say, "A person does not commit a transgression unless a spirit of *sheṭut* has entered them."⁷³⁴ Divine service consists of transforming, through *itkaphya* (subjugation) and *it-hapkha* (transformation), the *sheṭut* of the opposite side to holy *sheṭut* [as in the [Talmudic] saying, "The old man's *sheṭut* served him well"^{735ccviii}].

Thus were the panels made of *shittim* wood, since through a person's divine service one constructs of the "opposite insanity" (*shittim*) panels for the Tabernacle.^{ccix} This also explains the appellation *qerashim* (panels): for *qeresh* is an anagram for *sheqer* (falsehood), only rearranged.^{ccx} This means that their significance is that from the falsehood of the world we construct a panel of the Tabernacle, and in this way we erect (*shtelt men oyf*)^{ccxi} the Tabernacle.^{ccxii}

II

[My father-in-law] continues

Thereby explaining how the particular letters of *qeresh* relate to the content of the word as a whole (its significance being that the *sheqer* of the world is made into *qeresh*). There is the well known teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov that the names by which creations are called in the Holy Tongue is their very vitality and existence.⁷³⁶ Just as there is the vitality [conferred] by the word as a whole (the name), likewise each individual letter of the word embodies the *hamshakhah* of a particular and specific vital force and power. The written letter forms indicate the "shape" of this *hamshakhah*,^{ccxiii} as explained in

⁷²⁴ Exodus, 25:8.

⁷²⁵ b*Sotah*, 9a.

⁷²⁶ Tanya, beg. ch. 17.

⁷²⁷ Malachi, 3:22.

⁷²⁸ Deuteronomy, 33:4.

⁷²⁹ See commentary of ibn Ezra to Exodus, 26:15.

⁷³⁰ Exodus, loc cit.

⁷³¹ Ch. 3.

⁷³² b*Sanhedrin*, 106a.

⁷³³ *Siphre*, beg. portion of *Balaq*; Numbers Rabbah, 20:22; *Tanḥuma*, *Balaq*, 16.

⁷³⁴ b*Sotah*, 3a.

⁷³⁵ b*Ketubot*, 17a.

⁷³⁶ Tanya, beg. of *sha'ar ha-yiḥud weha-emunah*. See *Ohr torah* by the Maggid, end of portion *Bereshit*; and in several places.

Sha'ar ha-yihud weha-'emunah.⁷³⁷ This (specified) vital force also relates to the vitality of the word in its entirety.

Although the vital force of the entire word is the “light that surmounts all [the individual letters],” which comprises and rivals all the specific kinds of powers and vital forces of the [individual] letters,⁷³⁸ meaning that it is incomparably superior to the vital forces of the letters^{ccxiv} [and similarly regarding the word *qeresh*: seemingly, its content has no relation to its [individual] letters], nevertheless, it has been explained in several places that even this (surmounting) light relates to the specific letters.⁷³⁹ This is also [evident] from the precise phraseology “a light that surmounts *all of them*.”^{ccxv} Although it is a light that is incomparable to the light of the individual letters, it nevertheless “surmounts” via “all of them,” the individual letters. Accordingly we understand regarding the name *qeresh*: the individual letters also relate to its meaning, that *sheqer* is made into *qeresh*.^{ccxvi}

in the discourse, there⁷⁴⁰: Now, in the introduction to the Zohar, regarding the letters that “ascended before the Holy One, blessed be he, wherewith to create the world etc.,” it states that the letter[s] *qoph* and *resh* “are letters that appear on the evil side, and in order to maintain themselves they take the letter *shin* with themselves etc.,” the letter *shin* being “a letter of truth” (as written earlier in the Zohar, there). The reason they required a letter of truth is because “falsehood (*sheqer*) has no feet etc.”^{ccxvii}

[A person’s] divine service consists of constructing of this *sheqer* (of the letters *qoph* and *resh*) the panels (*qerashim*) of the Tabernacle. This is accomplished through the “opposite side” of these letters. For “one opposite the other did G-d make.”^{741ccxviii} As a counterpart to the letter *resh* (a “letter of falsehood”) on the opposite side, there is the letter *dalet* on the side of the holy. Although *dalet* and *resh* have the same meaning, for *dalet* is etymologically^{ccxix} related to *dalut* (indigence) and poverty, while the letter *resh* is [also] etymologically related to poverty and indigence, they are nevertheless separate and distinct in their significance, so much so that the difference between them is fundamental.

This is evident from what the Midrash states regarding the care that must be taken not to substitute a *dalet* for a *resh* or a *resh* for a *dalet*.⁷⁴² These letters constitute the distinction between *HaWaYaH ehad* (*HaWaYaH* is one) and the notion of *el aher* (another god) [in both verses the [respective] *dalet* and *resh* are [written] as enlarged letters^{ccxx}]. When one substitutes a *resh* instead of the *dalet* or a *dalet* instead of a *resh*, they destroy worlds. Thus it is understood that the difference between them is one of polar opposition.^{ccxxi}

The difference in their respective letter forms is [as explained in the seventh section] and all sevenths are beloved, as above.^{5ccxxii}

that the letter *dalet* has a diminutive *yod* [the aspect of “a point”]^{ccxxiii} at its rear, unlike the letter *resh*. It is via this *yod* that, instead of a *resh*, which is the notion of impoverishment and indigence on the opposite side, the letter *dalet* of the side of the holy is formed (thus far a paraphrase of ch. 7, there).

⁷³⁷ End of chs. 11 and 12.

⁷³⁸ Ibid, ch. 12.

⁷³⁹ See discourse “*Shir ha-ma'alot – 5664*” (*Sepher ha-ma'amarim – 5664*, 153).

⁷⁴⁰ In discourse “*Ha-yoshevet be-gannim*, ch. 6.

⁷⁴¹ Ecclesiastes, 7:14.

⁷⁴² Leviticus Rabbah, 19:2.

Although *dalet* is also etymologically related to indigence (*dalut*) (as above), this is in no way the notion of the poverty of the *resh* of the opposite side. For on the holy side, the notion of indigence represents the notion of *biṭṭul* [characterizing] the holy realm. Thus it is written, “May my soul be as dust to everyone,” “For I am a pauper and a needy individual etc.,”^{743ccxxiv} which is the notion of indigence that is due to the *biṭṭul* of the holy realm. [The various modes and levels of *biṭṭul* were explained at length in the preceding section,⁷⁴⁴ up to the *biṭṭul* of “her self was diminished,”⁷⁴⁵ and “the moon has nothing of her own at all.”⁷⁴⁶ – The *biṭṭul* of “she has nothing of her own at all” is the most complete expression of *biṭṭul*, even more so than the *biṭṭul* of “her self was diminished.” For when “her self was diminished,” there remains some selfhood, only that this selfhood is in a state of “diminishment”^{ccxxv}; whereas when “she has nothing of her own at all,” she has no selfhood whatsoever (not even a diminished one), and it is the ultimate *biṭṭul*.^{ccxxvi}] It is otherwise for the poverty of the opposite side; [poverty’s] significance there is as it is written “but the poor man has nothing (*en kol*).”⁷⁴⁷

[My father-in-law] continues the discourse,⁷⁴⁸ explaining the notion of the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* (which distinguishes it from the *resh* of the opposite side, which has no *yod*), that although it is the most diminutive letter of all the letters, it is [also] the beginning of all the letters. For each letter begins with the letter *yod*, which signifies [what is stated in the Talmud *Menahot*⁷⁴⁹] that “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created” [from which is subsequently drawn down to the Sefirah of *yesod* (as will be explained below)]. Regarding this it says ‘For all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth,”⁷⁵⁰ which the Targum renders as “which unites heaven and earth.” This is the Sefirah of *yesod*, from which [the Sefirah of] *malkhut* receives etc. (thus far [summarizing] the discourse, there).^{ccxxvii}

III

To explain the relationship between the two notions of “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created” and “for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth,” which are linked in [my father-in-law’s] discourse, although they would seem to be two distinct ideas:

This is also understood from what is written in *Ohr hatorah* by the Rebbe, the *Tsemaḥ tsedeq*, in the discourse “*Shtey yadot la-qeresh*” (“each panel had two prongs”),^{751ccxxviii} that “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created” refers to [the Sefirah of] *ḥokhmah*, from which the world-to-come, the Sefirah of *binah*, extends,^{ccxxix} while the *yod* of “for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth” refers to the Sefirah of *yesod* [and he adds in *Ohr ha-torah* that this is the diminutive *yod*, whereas the *yod* that is *ḥokhmah* is an ordinary *yod*^{ccxxx}].⁷⁵²

⁷⁴³ Psalms, 86:1.

⁷⁴⁴ Ch. 6. See also discourse *Bati le-ganni* – 5736 (*Torat menaḥem, sepher ha-ma’amarim bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 208 ff.).

⁷⁴⁵ Zohar I, 20a; III, 191a.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid, I, 249b.

⁷⁴⁷ II Samuel, 12:3.

⁷⁴⁸ In ch. 7.

⁷⁴⁹ 29b.

⁷⁵⁰ I Chronicles, 29:11. See Zohar I, 31a; III, 257a; Zohar *ḥadash*, 103b; *liqutṭey torah*, portion *Egev*, 17b; and in several places.

⁷⁵¹ *Terumah*, 1514.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

This may be understood based on what the Alter Rebbe^{ccxxxi} explains in *Torah ohr*,⁷⁵³ interpreting the verse ‘Who dwells aloft etc.’^{754ccxxxii} [He writes] that the *yod* which follows the letter *hey* (of *ha-magbihi* (“aloft”)) is superfluous; but it means to say that this elevation of [the Sefirah of] *malkhut* of [the world of] *atsilut*,^{ccxxxiii} which is called “*hey*,” in order for it to ascend etc. it is via the *yod*, namely the *yod* that is within the *hey*. For *malkhut* of *atsilut* is the aspect of *dalet*, for “she has nothing of her own at all”; when [divinity] is drawn down through [observance of] the *mitswah*, a *yod* forms within it, and thus it becomes a *hey*, and then through the *yod* within it, it ascends above etc.^{ccxxxiv}

Through this, ‘Who lowers himself to see in the heavens and on earth’ is also achieved.^{ccxxxv}

However, prior to when (via the drawing down of the *yod* into the *dalet*) it becomes a *hey*, there is the *yod* which is a part of the *dalet* [itself]. This is the concept that is being explained here.^{ccxxxvi}

(Meaning that) the drawing down of the *yod* is in a manner that the *yod* [is located] at the rear of the *dalet*. The *yod* is not drawn internally (in a manner of “face to face”), for that is when the *yod* that is in the *dalet* is at its front; then the *yod* forms its own column, and the *dalet* becomes a *he* [which is the notion explicated further along in the discourse⁷⁵⁵]. Here, however, the *hamshakhah* is in such a fashion that the *yod* forms a part of the rear of the *dalet* (so that the *hamshakhah* is merely in a state of “the hind part”).^{ccxxxvii}

[On the basis of this explanation, it is understood that the *yod* of *yesod*, “for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth,” is not [identical with] the notion discussed in most places that refers to the “union of sun and moon,” [the Sefirot of] *yesod* and *malkhut*. For that union (of sun and moon) occurs when the Sefirah of *malkhut* is in the state of *hey*, which will be discussed below in section 8.^{ccxxxviii} What is being explained here is the diminutive *yod* (of *yesod*) as it is a part of the letter *dalet*.⁷⁵⁶]

To explain the concept (of the *yod* that is drawn down to the *dalet*): This is as explicated in *Torah ohr*³⁸ [with this the Alter Rebbe and the *Tsemaḥ tsedeq*^{ccxxxix} explain the connection between “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created” and the *yod* of *yesod*], based on the statement of the *Zohar*⁷⁵⁷ glossing the verse ‘May the name of *HaWaYaH* be blessed,’⁷⁵⁸ that for there to be divine revelation (“blessed”)^{ccxli} in *malkhut*, referred to as “name,” this is through “may [it] be” (*yehi*).^{ccxlii} The *yod* and *hey* [of *yehi*] refer to [the Sefirot] *ḥokhmah* and *binah* [respectively]. These are drawn down into the [latter] *yod* [of *yehi*] ([which corresponds] with [the Sefirah of] *yesod* of *ze’eyr ’anpin*).^{ccxliii} Thus *yehi* represents [the bestowal of] *ḥokhmah* and *binah* into *yesod*. The primary *hamshakhah* (into *yesod* of *ze’eyr ’anpin*) is specifically from the *yesod* of *abba* [i.e. *ḥokhmah*].^{ccxliv}

As written in *kitvey ha-’Arizal*^{ccxlv} that *yesod* of *abba* is extended, and concludes at *yesod* of *ze’eyr ’anpin*, whereas *yesod* of *imma* [i.e. *binah*] is truncated [which is the notion of Joseph being orphaned of his mother^{ccxlv}], for “*binah* extends until [the Sefirah of]

⁷⁵³ 40a.

⁷⁵⁴ Psalms, 113:5.

⁷⁵⁵ Ch. 8.

⁷⁵⁶ *Torah ohr*, loc cit.

⁷⁵⁷ I, 232b.

⁷⁵⁸ Psalms, ibid, 2.

hod.⁷⁵⁹ The explanation of this is, as explicated in several places,⁷⁶⁰ that this is analogous to the distinction between hearing and seeing. For “hearing is not comparable to seeing.”⁷⁶¹ Hearing, which is the concept of understanding and comprehension, extends to and perceives only spiritual matters; this is why “*yesod* of *imma* extends until *hod*.” It is otherwise with sight: This perceives physical matters.^{ccxlv} Likewise (above [in the spiritual realm]), *yesod* of *abba* extends into *yesod* of *ze'eyr 'anpin*, to the extent that *yesod* of *abba* itself is en clothed in *yesod* of *ze'eyr 'anpin*. We can posit that this also⁷⁶² [correlates with] the notion that “*abba* lays the foundation of *barta* [daughter, i.e. *malkhut*].”^{763ccxlvii} It is known that the root of letters is from *hokhmah*.^{764ccxlviii} Similarly above, the Sefirah of *malkhut* [which is the notion of the letter *dalet* explained in the discourse] has its root in the aspect of *hokhmah*.^{ccxlix}

For it is *yesod* of *abba* itself [and when it says “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created,” it refers to *abba*^{cc}] that extends and is en clothed in *yesod* of *ze'eyr 'anpin* (as a result of which there is the extension, “blessed,” into the Sefirah of *malkhut*).^{ccli}

This is the explanation for the sequence [of thoughts] in the discourse,³³ where immediately after citing that “by the *yod* was the world-to-come created,” he continues that “regarding this it is said ‘for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth.’” For it is the *yod* by which the world-to-come was created itself ([i.e.] *yesod* of *abba*) that is drawn down and en clothed in the Sefirah of *yesod*, such that it is itself ‘for all (*kol*) that is in heaven and on earth’ that is the Sefirah of *yesod*.^{cclii}

IV

Now, the reason that it is imperative that the *yod* (of the Sefirah of *yesod* etc.) be drawn down into the *dalet* (of the Sefirah of *malkhut*), despite what was explained above that there must be absolute self-abnegation (“her self was diminished,” and “she has nothing of her own at all”),^{ccliii} is because the notion of *biṭṭul* (on its own, is not the desired end; rather it) is a precursor to the disclosure^{ccliv}

Meaning: It is not the case that, from the perspective of *biṭṭul* in the realm of the holy, there is no thing or existence at all. On the contrary: in the realm of the holy there is everything (*s'iz do alts*).^{cclv} Rather, the notion of *biṭṭul* is [understood in the context of] the precise phraseology “(the moon) has nothing of her own at all.” It is not said in this context that her abnegation is such that “she has nothing at all” period (without the word *le-garmah*^{cclvi} (“of her own”). Rather, “she has nothing of her own at all,” in and of herself. However, on account of (and via) her [stance of] *biṭṭul* toward the *yod*, [i.e.] the Sefirah of *yesod*, she has everything.

This also explains the sequence of the discourse: After explaining that the realm of the holy is [characterized by] *biṭṭul*,⁷⁶⁵ [my father-in-law] clarifies³³ that this is not to say that it has nothing; rather, on the contrary, in this way it has all^{cclvii} (since the *dalet* of *malkhut* contains the *yod* of the Sefirah of *yesod*). Thus he continues the discourse (there) with

⁷⁵⁹ *Ets hayyim, sha'ar ha-kelalim*, ch. 10; *sha'ar* 29, ch. 8; and in several places.

⁷⁶⁰ So in *Torah ohr*, *ibid*.

⁷⁶¹ *Mekhilta, Yitro*, 19:9.

⁷⁶² See *Torah ohr*, *ibid*.

⁷⁶³ *Zohar III*, 256b (in *Ra'aya mehemna*); 258a (in *Ra'aya mehemna*); in several places.

⁷⁶⁴ See Tanya, *Iggeret ha-qodesh*, Epistle 5; and in several places.

⁷⁶⁵ In ch. 6.

an explication of the statement of the Master of the Academy that “one that is minor, he is great; and one that is great, he is minor.”⁷⁶⁶ On account of the [characteristic of] *biṭṭul* in the holy realm (“he is minor”), there is greater disclosure and effluence than the magnitude (“he is great”) that [characterizes] the opposite side.^{cclviii}

It is likewise with regard to divine service. It is known that the intended [implication] of the notion of *biṭṭul* is not, G-d forbid, the state of a “trampled threshold.”^{cclix} On the contrary, divine service must be practiced with expansiveness, as it is written, ‘And I shall walk in wide ways.’⁷⁶⁷ One’s conduct with regard to holy matters, [i.e.] Torah study, observance of the commandments, etc., must be in a lofty manner etc.^{cclx} *Biṭṭul* is necessary as a prerequisite, so that through the [attitude of] *biṭṭul* that “my soul be like dust to all,” there can be the “open[ing] of my heart to your Torah,”^{cclxi} similar to the above [concept] that through *biṭṭul*, one has all.

that follows it.^{cclxii}

Now, since the [quintessential] point of this *hemshekh* (of *Bati le-ganni*)^{cclxiii} is that the ultimate intention is that “he, may he be blessed, might have a dwelling in the nether realms,”^{cclxiv} so that this intention concerns the entire evolutionary system of the worlds,^{cclxv} it is understood that the concept that the purpose of the *biṭṭul* (of the letter *dalet*) is to enable the disclosure (of the letter *yod*) (which is elaborated on in this section), is valid for the entirety of the evolutionary system of the worlds (as will be explained below regarding worlds, souls, Torah etc.).^{cclxvi}

This notion (that the purpose of *biṭṭul* is to enable disclosure) may be understood with the preface of the Alter Rebbe’s exposition in Tanya, ch. 49, [on the idea] that the *biṭṭul* required of every Jew must be “as water reflects the face to the face.”⁷⁶⁸ “Just as the Holy One, blessed be he, as it were, set and removed to one side, to use an analogy, his great, unending light etc.”^{cclxvii} and he set aside all of the holy supernal hosts, causing his presence (*shekhinah*) to dwell upon us etc. ‘you have chosen us from every nation and language etc. you have drawn us near etc.’ When one considers etc. then automatically, as water reflects face to face, his soul will blaze etc. [being moved] to set aside and abandon all one has etc.”

Now, since the *biṭṭul* is achieved through contemplating the first *tsimtsum* “as water reflects face to face,” it is evident that this [abnegation] is utterly complete. For this *tsimtsum*, where “the Holy One, blessed be he, as it were, set his great light to one side,” was in a manner of utter removal. This is the difference between the first *tsimtsum* and all other *tsimtsumim*: the initial *tsimtsum* constitutes an utter removal of the original light altogether, whereas the other *tsimtsumim* constitute a diminishment of the light. By progressively descending from one level to another, the light becomes diminished, a glimmer is drawn forward via a screen and a curtain etc.^{cclxviii}

[The reason why the initial *tsimtsum* is in a manner of removal is because it is specifically via this kind of *tsimtsum* that the selfhood of the worlds could come into existence. Thus is written in *Ets hayyim*, that “at the start of all, there was a supernal, homogeneous^{cclxix} light that filled all existence etc. There was no place to establish the worlds. He then constricted himself,”⁷⁶⁹ which is the notion of the initial *tsimtsum* which

⁷⁶⁶ Zohar I, 122b; III, 161a.

⁷⁶⁷ Psalms, 119:45.

⁷⁶⁸ Proverbs, 27:19.

⁷⁶⁹ Gate I (*Derush 'iggullim we-yosher*), Branch 2.

is in a manner of utter removal. Were the *tsimtsum* not in such a manner (of removal), there could not have been the creation of the existence of worlds.^{cclxxx}

Now since the *tsimtsum* was in a manner of utter removal [as stated in Tanya (ibid) “He removed his great light”], it is understood that “as water reflects the face to the face,” the person’s *biṭṭul* engendered by this contemplation (as above) is likewise *biṭṭul* of utmost perfection, on the model of the *tsimtsum* [as it is] above.^{cclxxxi}

Now, since the *biṭṭul* is like water reflecting face to face, it follows that, just as for the person, once the above-mentioned contemplation effects *biṭṭul* [in a manner of] “setting aside and abandoning all one has,” the end of this *biṭṭul* is to make [G-d] a “dwelling in the nether realms” via Torah [study] and [observance of] its commandments,⁷⁷⁰ it is similarly so above as well (which in turn sparks an analogous model of divine service on the part of the person)^{cclxxii}: when, at the beginning of the system of *hishtalshelut*^{cclxxiii} [G-d] “set aside and removed his great light to one side,” this is toward subsequent disclosure.^{cclxxiv} To quote (the beginning of) *Ets ḥayyim*,^{cclxxv} “Before any emanated beings were emanated etc., there was a supernal, homogeneous light that filled all existence, and there was no place to establish the worlds etc. He then constricted himself etc. and drew down a straight, thin line^{cclxxvi} etc.”⁵⁴ Yet even this constriction’s purpose is [not for constriction’s sake but rather toward] drawing down the *qaw* (line) via the *tsimtsum*.

To quote the Ba’al Shem Tov’s^{cclxxvii} teaching⁷⁷¹: “This is the notion of ‘G-d said – Let there be light! and there was light.’⁷⁷² (As explained there,) this means to say ‘*Ha-shem yitbarakh* said, by the force of the attribute of *Elokim*, which is the attribute of Severity that constricts the light, because of this there will be a sustainable light which the world can tolerate.” This means that the purpose of *tsimtsum* is not for *tsimtsum*’s sake, but so that through this there will be an assimilable and sustainable light.^{cclxxviii}

Thus the Maggid^{cclxxix} (may his soul rest in Eden) elaborates, that this explains the scriptural phraseology “and there was light” [[in contrast to] other creations, where it says “and it was so,” while here it says “and there was light”^{cclxxx}].⁷⁷³ Additionally, our sages say that “wherever it is said ‘*va-yehi* (and it was),’ this is always an expression of anguish.”⁷⁷⁴ This is because the light that was later actually drawn down (via the *tsimtsum* of “and *Elokim* said”) cannot be compared (*kumt er nit*)^{cclxxxi} to the light as it is within the *tsimtsum*, namely in the conceptualized purpose of the *tsimtsum* (*vi der oyr shteyt in tsimtsum*)^{cclxxxii}. This means that the light [referenced] in the utterance of ‘And *Elokim* said’ is not the [same] light that is subsequently drawn down in fact, [namely] in the short, thin line^{cclxxxiii} (to use the terminology of the above-mentioned [passage of] *Ets ḥayyim*). [This is why it does not say ‘it was so,’ since this is light is not identical with [the referent] in ‘And G-d said let there be light.’] Rather, it is a different light (*an ander oyr*)^{cclxxxiv}. Therefore about this it is said “*va-yehi*,” an expression of anguish and *tsimtsum*; however^{cclxxxv}, through this a sustainable light is achieved.

⁷⁷⁰ See Tanya, *ibid*, at the end of the chapter.

⁷⁷¹ *Keter shem tov*, sec. 247; see *Liqutey torah*, portion of *Mas’ey*, 95b.

⁷⁷² Genesis, 1:3.

⁷⁷³ *Ohr torah*, end sec. 2; see also *ibid*, end sec. 183.

⁷⁷⁴ *bMegillah*, 10b; *Midrash Lev. Rabbah*, 11:7.

Now, what has been explained above that the intent of *tsimtsum* is for the purpose of disclosure applies primarily with regard to the initial *tsimtsum* specifically.^{cclxxxvi} This is elaborated on in a discourse by the master of the *hillula* of the year 5702 (1941-42).⁷⁷⁵ It is known that the initial *tsimtsum* within the Light of the Infinite (may he be blessed)^{cclxxxvii} differs from the [other] *tsimtsumim* of the system of *hishtalshelut*; for the *tsimtsumim* within the *hishtalshelut* system entail a mere diminishment of the light, meaning that through the progressive evolution from level to level, the light is diminished by *tsimtsum* [a curtain, screen, and the like].^{cclxxxviii} It is otherwise with the initial *tsimtsum*; this entails the total removal of the light. But it is only in this *tsimtsum* that effects removal where there is a striking^{cclxxxix} property that is absent from the *tsimtsumim* within the *hishtalshelut* system.

The idea here: It is explained there, and in the *Hemshekh te'erav* (5672)^{776ccxc} by the Rebbe, *nishmato eden*,^{ccxc} that the advantage of [this] *tsimtsum* (which is precisely effecting removal) [is evident] not only for the purpose of the emanation of the lights, but primarily so that the emergence of the vessels will become possible.^{ccxcii} Thus *Ets hayyim* resolves [the problem] of the *tsimtsum* having effected specifically removal, rather than achieving the “thin line” merely through diminishment.^{777ccxciii} This is because, were the *qaw* of the Infinite to have remained from the outset [as would have occurred through a *tsimtsum* that effected simple diminishment of the light, not removal], it would not have been possible for the existence of vessels to emerge.

Through the *tsimtsum* having effected banishment of the light, there was revealed, first and foremost, the notion of limitation; the “trace” (*reshimu*) [the root of the vessels] was disclosed.^{ccxciv} Additionally, the light of the *qaw* that extends after the *tsimtsum* endured the disruption of the *tsimtsum*.^{ccxcv} It is unlike the Light of the Infinite (even the “light of limitation”)^{ccxcvi} that precedes the *tsimtsum* [as above in the Maggid’s teaching regarding the reason it does not say “and it was so,” but “and there was light”].^{ccxcvii} In this way the vessels emerged into existence, and they are able to absorb the light of the *qaw* within them.

In this manner a further astonishing matter subsequently transpires:^{ccxcviii}

This is highly astounding when contrasted with the other *tsimtsumim*: When the *tsimtsum* effects a diminishment of the light, not only is the light which radiates via the *tsimtsum*^{ccxcix} as it is prior to the *tsimtsum* of relative value^{ccc} to its state after the *tsimtsum*, but also the pre-*tsimtsum* light as a whole^{ccci} is linked with the light as it is post-*tsimtsum*. It is otherwise when light emerges via the initial *tsimtsum*, that is in a manner of removal of the light: Although the “light of limitation” (light of the *qaw*) that is drawn down after the *tsimtsum* is also incomparable to its [own] state pre-*tsimtsum* (see following insert),^{cccii} nevertheless, not only (on account of the *tsimtsum* being in a manner of the utter removal of the light) is there drawn down a “light of limitation” after the *tsimtsum*, which the vessels are capable of assimilating properly,^{ccciii} but there is even drawn down the entirety of the pre-*tsimtsum* light, meaning the “limitless light” (see following insert),^{ccciv} which the vessels absorb etc.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁵ *Sepher ha-ma'amarim* – 5702, 28 ff.

⁷⁷⁶ Vol. I, 13.

⁷⁷⁷ Gate I, Branch 3.

⁷⁷⁸ See *Sepher ha-ma'amarim* – *quntressim*, vol. 1, 130; 5689, 252.

The vessels develop in such a manner that they not only assimilate the supernal “light of limitation” well, without losing their selfhood (itself a matter of innovative attainment,^{cccv} as above), but moreover, they absorb the aspect of “limitless light” as well,

For once (on account of the *tsimtsum*) the Infinite’s potential for limitation is revealed, this circumscribes the limitless Light of the Infinite as well. This means that the light that became constricted and concealed, namely the limitless light,^{cccvi} becomes circumscribed by the *reshimu* (the potential for limitation).^{cccvii} Since the *tsimtsum*’s effect is to allow the Infinite’s potential for limitation to become apparent,^{cccviii} therefore, just as prior to the *tsimtsum*, when the Light of the Infinite that is unbounded was apparent, this light of unbounded nature overwhelmed the potential for limitation, such that it was undetectable^{cccix}

– The potential for limitation that is comprised within the divine essence is also unbounded, existing merely as the perfection of the blessed and exalted divine essence. Thus it is written in *Avodat ha-qodesh*^{cccx} that “the Infinite is perfection, without flaw, G-d forbid. Should you say that he has ability for limitlessness, but has no ability for limitation, you are positing a flaw in his perfection.^{cccxi} Rather, just as he has ability for limitlessness, he has ability for limitation.”⁷⁷⁹ It follows that the significance of the potential for limitation pre-*tsimtsum* is also unbounded.^{cccxi} –

Likewise, post-*tsimtsum*, when the determination of the divine will was that the potential for limitation become apparent, the potential for limitation circumscribes the unbounded Light of the Infinite as well.^{cccxiii} In this manner, the limitless light enters the realm of limitation, as elucidated in the discourses of the Holy Land^{cccxiv} by the master of the *hillula*.^{780cccxv} However, since the post-*tsimtsum* light is concealed, it is akin to the *yod* within the *dalet*, where it is a facet of the rear of the *dalet*, rather than a line unto itself as in the *hey*.^{cccxvi}

while remaining existing entities.

The ultimate intention in creating the worlds (and the *tsimtsum*) is toward Israel,⁷⁸¹ as it is known that when “the Holy One, blessed be he, desired to have a dwelling in the nether realms for himself,” this was for Israel.^{cccxvii} This accords with the teaching of the Maggid^{cccxviii} that the *tsimtsum* is on account of Israel, the righteous (*tsaddiqim*), as in the analogy of a father who constricts his intellect for the sake of his little son.⁷⁸²

Although Israel are in the configuration of Man (*adam*),^{cccix} yet there also exists an aspect of Israel as they are beyond the configuration of Man. The [Midrashic] saying has it that “Israel arose in the [divine] thought.”^{783cccxx} The phraseology is precise in saying “arose” in the level of thought, indicating the loftiest aspect of thought; [they arose] even beyond all thought, even beyond the primordial thought of *adam qadmon*.^{cccxxi} Thus it is explained in the *hemshekh* of *samekh-vav*^{cccxxii} (5666)⁷⁸⁴ and that of *te’erav*⁷⁸⁵ that when “the Holy One, blessed be he, desired to have a dwelling in the nether realms for himself,” this was with Israel in mind. The souls of Israel are comprised even within the

⁷⁷⁹ Part I, beg. ch. 8.

⁷⁸⁰ *Sepher ha-ma’amarim – quntressim*, vol. 1, 132; 5689, 254; see there for additional details regarding what is explained in the text.

⁷⁸¹ Rashi on the beginning of Genesis.

⁷⁸² Beg. *Liqutey amarim*; and in several places.

⁷⁸³ Midrash Genesis Rabbah, 1:4.

⁷⁸⁴ P. 351.

⁷⁸⁵ See *Hemshekh te’erav*, vol. II, 900.

level at which the Holy One “yearned” and “desired” etc.^{cccxxiii} Hence the [Midrashic] saying “From whom did he take counsel? From the souls of the righteous,”⁷⁸⁶ “and your nation is entirely righteous.”^{6cccxxiv} Thus it is understood that even the initial *tsimtsum* (which precedes the configuration and existence of Man) is also toward Israel.^{cccxxv}

VI

Now, all matters (above) have their parallel in the divine service of Israel as well.^{cccxxvi} It is likewise regarding the above discussion that through *tsimtsum* there is drawn down divine disclosure.

The idea: Divine service as a whole can be divided into service at the level of *panim* (the face), and service at the level of *aḥor* (the rear).⁷⁸⁷ Generally speaking, the difference between them is akin to the difference between the (literal) face and rear, which generally speaking is the notion of the nape of the neck. For the face is referred to thus (by the name *panim*), because the internal state (*penimiyut*) is manifest on it.⁷⁸⁸ The senses are realized in it as well: the sense of sight in the eyes, the sense of hearing in the ears, the sense of smell in the nostrils, and [the faculty of] speech in the mouth. It is otherwise with the rear, the nape of the neck: its vitality is obscured.

We can understand [that it is] similarly above, regarding the difference between the pre-*tsimtsum* light and that which is post-*tsimtsum*. As explained, the light that is drawn down via the *tsimtsum* is not of relative value to and unlike the pre-*tsimtsum* light. [Since it is drawn down via the interference of a *tsimtsum* that is in a manner of the utter removal of the original light, therefore the light that percolates through it is in a state of “new” light. (This is as mentioned from a teaching of the Maggid that “there was (a new) light,” rather than “it was so” (that which [was intended in what] “*Elokim* said”).)] [This difference] is to the extent that the post-*tsimtsum* light relative to the pre-*tsimtsum* light is on the scale of the rear relative to the face. Similarly, the divine service in a manner of *aḥor* is not of relative value to the divine service in a manner of *panim*.^{cccxxvii}

And yet, just as it was explained regarding the *tsimtsum* that on account of the *tsimtsum* the pre-*tsimtsum* light filters through even after the *tsimtsum* (and even the limitless [aspect of the pre-*tsimtsum*] light), it is likewise true of divine service: Even divine service that is in a manner of *aḥor* is irradiated by the *panim*. [This phenomenon develops along similar lines with regard to souls and to Torah (as will be elaborated presently).]^{cccxxviii}

VII

To explain this notion: Divine service in the manner of *panim* means (generally speaking) divine service as it is from the perspective of the world of *‘Atsilut*; divine service in the manner of *aḥor* is (generally speaking) divine service from the perspective of the worlds of *BeY’A*.^{cccxxix}

The world of *‘Atsilut* is, in general terms, the *hishtalshelut* system and the worlds as they are (*shteyen*)^{cccxxx} from the perspective of divinity.^{cccxxxi} *‘Atsilut* is etymologically related to *‘etslo* (next to him) and in proximity, as stated in *Pardess*.⁷⁸⁹ It is referred to as “the world of

⁷⁸⁶ Midrash Ruth Rabbah, beg. ch. 2.

⁷⁸⁷ See *Torah or*, 84b ff, at length.

⁷⁸⁸ See *Torah or*, 23c; *ibid*, 93b.

⁷⁸⁹ Beg. Gate of *‘ABeY’A*.

unity,” where “he is one with his vital forces and with his bones,”⁷⁹⁰ as stated in the introduction to *Tiqney zohar*.⁷⁹⁰ The worlds of *BeY'A* [in contrast] are called the “world of separation,” “thence they separate.”⁷⁹¹ This is the reverse of the world of unity (*'Atsilut*).

The two modes of divine service of *panim* and *aḥor* are similarly: In *'Atsilut* divine service is in a “frontal” manner ([aware of] manifest divinity), while in the worlds of *BeY'A* divine service is in a “rear” manner. The conduct of [the denizens] within *BeY'A* is in the mode of ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go’⁷⁹²; as the well-known expression has it, in *BeY'A* “worlds are a given and divinity is remarkable.”⁷⁹³ This is the state of *aḥor* (where divinity is not apparent).

In general terms, *panim* and *aḥor* as they are within the realm of the holy corresponds with the distinction between the period of exile and the future time-to-come (as well as the era when the Temple stood).⁷⁹⁴ Thus it is elucidated in *Torah or*, in the discourse titled “*Zakhor et asher 'aśah lekha 'amaleq*,”⁷⁹⁵ that regarding the period of exile it is said, ‘I will certainly eradicate the remembrance of 'Amaleq etc. *HaWaYaH*'s war against 'Amaleq etc.’⁷⁹⁶ This is because human service to the divine in its own right is in a manner of ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go,’ merely in the manner of *aḥor*. For this reason there can exist 'Amaleq's opposition. So it was the first time, ‘on the way, as you left Egypt,’ when Israel was in the desert. (The notion of a desert is the aspect of *aḥor*, as it is written, ‘When you followed me (*aḥaray*) into the desert.’⁷⁹⁷) Because of this, [‘Amaleq] attacked at your rear those straggling behind you (*aḥarekha*).’⁷⁹⁸ This corresponds with the concept of Pharaoh as well, for *Par'oh* is an anagram of *ha-'oreph* (the nape of the neck).⁷⁹⁹ Similarly, 'Amaleq consists of the letters of *malaq*, as in the phrase ‘he shall sever (*u-malaq*) its head from the nape of its neck.’⁸⁰⁰

Through doing battle with 'Amaleq, namely divine service in the manner of “after *HaWaYaH* etc.,”⁸⁰¹ and subsequent to first fulfilling the commandment of appointing a king –

[As is known regarding the three commandments that Israel was commanded upon their entry into the Land.⁷⁹⁹ There must first be the appointment of a king prior to annihilating 'Amaleq. Subsequently] –

We attain the fulfillment of the commandment to build the Holy Temple. Then divine service will be in the manner of “the face.” Regarding this it is said ‘It will be when *HaWaYaH* gives you respite from all your enemies all around you etc.’⁸⁰⁰ Then will divine service consist of ‘you (you yourself) shall certainly eradicate the remembrance of 'Amaleq.’⁸⁰¹ This will occur, in a general sense, when the Third Temple is built.

⁷⁹⁰ P. 3b.

⁷⁹¹ Genesis, 2:10.

⁷⁹² Deuteronomy, 13:5.

⁷⁹³ Discourse of “*Ba-sukkot teshvu*” – 5706, ch. 27 (*Sepher ha-ma'amarim* – 5706, 30).

⁷⁹⁴ Exodus, 17:14-16.

⁷⁹⁵ Jeremiah, 2:2.

⁷⁹⁶ Deuteronomy, 25:18.

⁷⁹⁷ *Liqutey torah* by Arizal, portion *Wa-yeshev*, and beg. portion *Shemot*; and in several places.

⁷⁹⁸ Leviticus, 5:8.

⁷⁹⁹ b*Sanhedrin*, 20b.

⁸⁰⁰ Deuteronomy, 25:19.

However, until then, and particularly during the exilic period, divine service is in a manner of *aḥor*.

Regarding this we have the directive:^{cccxlili} While admittedly [the Torah speaks toward the majority,⁸⁰¹ and] divine service is [currently] in the manner of ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go’

Even when one contemplates the interiority of the worlds and of the soul (as explained in *Torah or*⁷²), one’s divine service is still in at the level of *aḥor* alone. For divine service in the spirit of “love of delights” (which is the true level of interiority) represents receipt of one’s reward anticipating the world-to-come.^{cccxliv} Nowadays divine service only entails ‘Today, that you do them.’^{802 803cccxliv} Only the *tsaddiqim*, whose “hearts are hollow within them,”^{cccxlvi} and who have achieved the total “removal of the soiled garments,”^{cccxlvii} for they are quite repulsed by the delights of this world, and whose service is in the spirit of “love of delights,”⁸⁰⁴ can attain divine service at the level of *panim* even at present.

– similar to the mode of divine service prior to the Giving of the Torah,^{cccxlvi} as it is written ‘When you followed me into the desert’⁸⁰ –

See insert before last.

Yet, so that one’s divine service (in a manner of *aḥor*) be sustained, and have its desired effect, one needs empowerment^{cccxliv} for this by contemplating how, on account of the interiority of one’s soul and of one’s heart, one is (always) at the level of *panim*.^{ccc} This follows Maimonides’ well-known ruling in the Laws of Divorce, Ch. 2, that each and every Jew, in whatever state or station they may be, “wants to perform all the commandments, and to distance themselves from transgression, and [it is only] one’s nature that overpowers one etc.”^{ccccli} So, too, one considers that “even during the sin, [the soul] remains loyal to G-d,”^{805ccccli} since (the interiority of one’s soul) is a “portion of G-d from above, literally.”^{806ccccli}

Through this mediation, although one’s level is that of *itkaphya*, and has not as yet attained the mode of “transformation (*it-hapkha*) of darkness into light and of bitterness into sweetness”⁸⁰⁷ [at which point all *tsimtsum* and “opposite side” is annulled],^{ccccliv} one nevertheless possesses (by considering how at the interior level of one’s soul and heart, one is at the level of *panim*) empowerment, irradiation, and bestowal, even overt bestowal,^{cccclv} with regard to the externality of one’s soul as well (the *aḥor* of one’s soul), for the divine service of ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go,’ divine service in the manner of *aḥor*.^{cccclvi}

This [phenomenon] is to the extent that it affects one’s “garments” of thought, speech and action as well. Concomitant with the actual implementation of the matters [of divine service], “the act [being] primary,”^{808cccclvii} when a glimmer radiates from the interiority of one’s soul (through this contemplation), one possesses (in addition to actual implementation) energy and enjoyment as well, and one even attains pleasure.^{cccclviii} Thus it was previously explained (based on the above [ruling by] Maimonides), that although “we coerce him etc.,” yet when “he says I am willing,” that is his true will, for the Torah of Truth states about this that it is

⁸⁰¹ Guide for the Perplexed, part III, ch. 34.

⁸⁰² See also *Tanya*, end ch. 40.

⁸⁰³ See *bEruvin*, 22a.

⁸⁰⁴ See *Tanya*, ch. 10.

⁸⁰⁵ *Tanya*, end ch. 24.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid*, beg. ch. 2.

⁸⁰⁷ See *Zohar* I, 4a; cited in *Tanya*, end ch. 10.

⁸⁰⁸ *mAvot*, 1:17.

“willingly.”^{809ccclix} This is due to the irradiation of the interiority of one’s soul, which becomes apparent and affects the externality of one’s soul.

Even now (during the period of exile), there is extended to each and every Jew a glimmer and something of divine service at the level of *panim*. For each and every Jew recites daily ‘You shall love *HaWaYaH* your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might’⁸¹⁰ (which is divine service in the manner of *panim*; see *Torah or*⁷²), even as one’s divine service is in a state of ‘After *HaWaYaH* etc.’^{ccclx}

The *panim* illuminates such divine service that is, on its own, of the level of *aḥor*.

VIII

Just as it is at the initiation of the *hishtalshelut* (in the phenomenon of *tsimtsum*) and regarding divine service,^{ccclxi} so it is with regard to souls. The Mittlerer Rebbe^{ccclxii} explains in *Sha’ar ha-teshuvah*⁸¹¹ [briefly] regarding the statement of our Sages that the tribes^{ccclxiii} told Jacob, “Just as in your heart there is only One, so in our hearts there is only One.”^{812ccclxiv} There is the well-known point made about this: what was the intent of their prefacing “just as in your heart?” They should have seemingly said simply “in our hearts there is only One!”⁸¹³ Also, what supposition were the tribes preemptively negating?^{ccclxv}

So the idea is: The preface of “just as in your heart there is only One” is in the way of an explanation and justification for their proclamation that “in our hearts there is only One.”^{ccclxvi} The tribes represent the “nether chariot”^{ccclxvii} in the world of *Beri’ah*,

Thus is it written, ‘For there did ascend the tribes, tribes of *Ya-H*.’⁸¹⁴ “*Ya-H*” refers to ‘*Atsilut*.’^{ccclxviii} Since the tribes’ souls are of *BeY’A*, they must “ascend,” achieve ascent, to become “tribes of *Ya-H*.”^{ccclxix}

where the worlds of *BeY’A*, the “world of separation,” begin. The general state of these worlds is one of separateness, as it is written ‘Thence they separate,’ ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d’ (as above). Despite this, there is nevertheless “only One” in our hearts.^{ccclxx}

This means: Granted that (even with the most perfect divine service in the realm of *Beri’ah*) to all appearances divine service is at the level of *wa’ed*, which is merely a transmutation of the letters of *eḥad*.^{815ccclxxi} This means that divine service is at the level of ‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d etc.’ Nevertheless, “in our hearts,” i.e. in the interiority of our hearts, there is the aspect of *eḥad* (“One”).

Now, this that even (for the tribes) as they are in *BeY’A*, “the world of separation,” there should be *eḥad* within the interiority of their hearts, is enabled on account of the fact that “in your heart there is only One” (as mentioned above, that this is an explanation and justification for why “in our hearts there is only One”). The level of Jacob (“in your heart”), whose [proper] place is in the world of ‘*Atsilut*,’^{ccclxxii} is furthermore the “chosen of the patriarchs,”⁸¹⁶ the

⁸⁰⁹ Leviticus, 1:3; Maimonides [*Mishneh torah*], Laws of Performing the Sacrifices, 4:16.

⁸¹⁰ Deuteronomy, 6:5.

⁸¹¹ Chs. 25-26.

⁸¹² b*Pessahim*, 56a.

⁸¹³ *Or ha-torah* cited in fn103.

⁸¹⁴ Psalms, 122:4; *Torah or*, beg. *hosaphot*.

⁸¹⁵ *Zohar* II, 134a; *Tanya*, *Sha’ar ha-yihud weha-emunah*, ch. 7.

⁸¹⁶ *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*, 76:1.

patriarchs who “are the very chariot.”⁸¹⁷ Therefore, his divine service etc. is at the level of *ehad*. This it is that draws down

Since the aspect of Jacob is the “central bar which spans from one end to the other,” therefore there is drawn down through him of the *biṭṭul* of ‘*Atsilut* in *BeY’A* as well.^{ccclxxxiii} to “our hearts” (of the tribes, in *BeY’A*) as well “only One” (the *biṭṭul* etc. at [the level of] *ehad*).

Nevertheless, regarding this *hamshakhah* it is still said “just as etc. so etc.,” implying that they are not identical notions. As the *Tsemah tsedeg*^{ccclxxxiv} explains in his discourses,^{818ccclxxxv} the [tribes’] proclamation “just as in your heart etc. so etc.” is precisely the notion [expressed in] the statement⁸¹⁹ “In the manner in which they are unified above, in like fashion is she unified below at the throne, to become one with one etc.”^{820ccclxxxvi} When “they are unified above” as One, it is likewise drawn down “below, at the throne, to become one with one.”^{ccclxxxvii} [Likewise this^{ccclxxxviii} extends to the twelve tribes, as is elaborated there that these are the “twelve diagonal limits” that result from the incorporation of the six extremities (the six *middot*) with one another.^{ccclxxxix}] However, this is still only “in the manner”; it is not of identical significance with the state of ‘*Atsilut*. Likewise, when the tribes proclaimed (as mentioned, that this extends to the twelve tribes) “Just as etc. so etc.,” [this means] that from the Superior Unity in “your heart,” in ‘*Atsilut*, there likewise extends to us (in *BeY’A*) the level of Inferior Unity, so that our selfhood adopts a posture of *biṭṭul* to the ‘*ayin* (Naught).^{ccclxxx} This is not, however, exactly like the Superior Unity; only “just as etc. so etc.”^{ccclxxxxi}

This [illustrates] how in the souls of *BeY’A* (the souls of the tribes) there also extends an irradiation from the souls of ‘*Atsilut* (the soul of Jacob), just as it is with regard to *hishtalshelut* as a whole, and to divine service.

IX

Now, from the fact that also into the level of *aḥor* there extends of the level of *panim* with regard to souls (as discussed above at length), we can understand that also with regard to Torah [since “he gazed into the Torah and created the world”⁸²¹] the interior aspect of Torah irradiates its hinder aspect.^{ccclxxxii} We may understand this based on the exposition of the Rebbe Maharash in the *Hemshekh* “*we-kakhah* – 5637” [this year being the centennial of its [original] recital⁸²²], how there are four aspects to the Torah.

Most discourses^{ccclxxxiii} suggest that there are three levels in the Torah; however, in this *hemshekh* (of 5637) he distinguishes and elucidates four aspects.^{ccclxxxiv} It is written: ‘The Torah commanded us by Moses is a heritage (*morashah*) etc.’¹³ The term *morashah* is also related to *yerushah* (inheritance).^{823ccclxxxv} Now this appears [problematic]; for have not our Sages said, “Prepare yourself to study Torah, for it is *not* yours as an inheritance?”⁸²⁴ This contradicts the expounding^{ccclxxxvi} of [the word] *morashah* as related to *yerushah*! At times we find our Sages saying that the Torah was given us as a gift,⁸²⁵ and at times

⁸¹⁷ Ibid, 47:6.

⁸¹⁸ *Or ha-torah*, portion *Tetsaweh*, 1664.

⁸¹⁹ Zohar II, 135a.

⁸²⁰ Quoted thus in the above-mentioned discourse; apparently an abridgement of the Zoharic text.

⁸²¹ Ibid, 161b.

⁸²² Ch. 66, ff.

⁸²³ See b*Sanhedrin*, 59a; *ibid*, 91b.

⁸²⁴ m*Avot*, 2:12.

⁸²⁵ b*Nedarim*, 55a.

we find that the Torah is called “bride,” as our Sages have expounded [the verse ‘The Torah commanded us etc.’] “Read not *morashah*, but *me'orassah* (betrothed).”⁸²⁶ The Torah is a bride betrothed to a man, namely the souls of Israel etc.

Now, each of these four aspects is a notion and subject distinct from the others. Inheritance is something that [a person] receives inevitably, as “one who stipulates counter to what is written in the Torah, their stipulation is null,”⁸²⁷ so that the commandment regarding inheritance must necessarily [occur] etc.^{cccxxxvii} The notion of a gift [is otherwise]: it is [given] voluntarily by the giver. If the benefactor wishes to bestow the gift, all is well; otherwise, the recipient has no claim to it.^{cccxxxviii} “Prepare yourself” implies [acquiring Torah] specifically through one’s own efforts. If one applies oneself well, then the good results of one’s labor which they invested in [Torah study] will be attained; but if one does not invest as much effort, they will not have [the same success]. Therefore [the sage] urges one, saying “prepare yourself to study, for it is not an inheritance” which will inevitably be attained. It is likewise not a gift that is given even if one has not labored as intensively,^{cccxxxix} rather, “prepare yourself,” toil at Torah study, and then one will be successful etc. As to the notion of the Torah as bride, this, too, is another matter etc.

The idea:⁸²⁸ It is not possible to maintain the Torah but with intensive exertion etc. Thus our Sages say, “If you have exerted yourself and achieved, you may believe it; if you have not exerted yourself and achieved, do not believe it.”^{829cccxc} For without toil one cannot attain the words of the Torah. This is the notion of their saying “prepare yourself to study Torah, for it is not yours as an inheritance,” that you might say that it will come to you even without any effort at all etc. Commensurate to one’s effort that one invests in Torah study, in like measure will one grow in understanding the Torah and in drawing down the divinity which is drawn down through one’s study and toil at Torah etc.

Regarding this our Sages say, “Whosoever reads [Scripture] and recites [Mishnah],^{cccxcii} the Holy One, blessed be he, reads and recites equal to them,”⁸³⁰ [implying that] one draws divinity down into the Torah.^{cccxciii} It is with regard to this *hamshakhah* that the souls of Israel are referred to as “bridegroom” and the Torah is referred to as “bride” etc.^{cccxciii} The Holy One’s “reading and reciting” is precisely “equal to them,” meaning due to the person’s reading and reciting.

The notion of [Torah as] an inheritance and a gift is:⁸³¹ The entire objective of the performance of the commandments [for “great is study, as it leads to deed”⁸³²], which were embedded in physical items, is in order to extract (*berur*) the “sparks of *Tohu*” which fell down through the shattering of the vessels [[these sparks] being “abundant lights” both in quantity and in quality].^{cccxciv} It is via this *berur* that we appropriate^{cccxcv} *KaHaB*^{cccxcvi} of *Tohu*. Since [this achievement] is [entirely] incommensurate to the [efforts of] *berur* etc. [as it is known, that the [efforts] of *berur* at the present time [affect] only the seven lower [levels] of *Tohu*, and through these [efforts], *KaHaB* of *Tohu* are also appropriated of their own accord, as explained in the

⁸²⁶ b*Berakhot*, 57a, and references there.

⁸²⁷ b*Ketubot*, 83a, and references there.

⁸²⁸ *Hemshekh* “*we-kakhah*” – 5637, ch. 67.

⁸²⁹ b*Meggilah*, 6b.

⁸³⁰ See *Yalqut shim'oni*, Lamentations, sec. 1034; *Tanna de-bey eliyahu rabbah*, beg. ch. 18.

⁸³¹ “*We-kakhah*” *ibid*, ch. 68.

⁸³² b*Qiddushin*, 40b.

hemshekh beginning with [the discourse] *Al tatsar et Mo'av* by the Mittlerer Rebbe⁸³³], it is therefore called *yerushah* (inheritance).^{cccxcvii}

When one achieves and attains this “inheritance,” one is then granted a gift. This means that from the Light of the Infinite is drawn down an aspect that transcends *Tohu*.^{cccxcviii} This is the level of a gift, meaning that which cannot at all be attained save as a gift alone. This implies that it is beyond inheritance; for although an inheritance is also something that one does not earn through one’s own efforts, one is nevertheless eligible [to receive it]. For, why is it that a son inherits his father? It is because he comes from him etc.^{cccxcix} Thus inheritance is attained by one that has a bond, attachment, and relation to [the one who bequeaths] etc.

Similarly it may be understood in the analogue: Since one effects *berur* of the sparks of *Tohu* [one becomes a “brother to Esau” in a positive way, and] therefore one is given as an inheritance the lights of *KaHaB* of *Tohu* etc. However, the notion of a gift is that which was not attained through one’s actions at all etc. The analogue is etc. where “arousal from below”^{cd} does not reach; the *hamshakhah* from that [level] is a gift.

Thus our Sages say, “The first three hours [of the day], the Holy One, blessed be he, sits and is occupied with Torah [study].”⁸³⁴ Now seemingly, this must be understood; for do not our Sages say, “Whosoever reads and recites, the Holy One reads and recites equal to them?” As such, there would not exist in the world a single hour that is vacant, without someone learning at that time at all! For there are those who have no spare time by day, so they study at night; yet the primary [time] for study is by day, as in the statement, “We, we are day workers.”⁸³⁵ Notwithstanding this, they also stated that “nighttime was created for study alone.”¹²⁰ Thus, of the entire day and the entire night there cannot be found one empty hour in which even one solitary Jew cannot be found to be studying at that time. As such, “the Holy One is reading and reciting equal to them”; what then is the concept of “the first three hours,” when “the Holy One sits and is occupied with Torah etc.?”^{cdi} Also, what is the meaning of “sitting and being occupied with Torah etc.?”^{cdii}

The notion is, as above: When it is said that “whosoever reads and recites the Holy One reads and recites equal to them,” this indicates that [divinity] is drawn down commensurate to one’s efforts and labors. Hence the precise phraseology of “reads and recites equal to them.”^{cdiii} This implies that this is a measured and limited level.

It is otherwise regarding the reference to the “first three hours.” This refers to a *hamshakhah* [that is entirely beyond measure and limitation] that is drawn down as a gift from on high, even without an “arousal from below” etc. Therefore it is called “sitting,” analogous to one who lowers themselves down to sit [who, when sitting, brings their *head* lower down], “and is occupied with Torah.”^{cdiv} The “first three” refer to a level that is beyond measure and limitation, similar to the term “the initial three” cited in many places in the Kabbalistic works.^{cdv}

Nevertheless, even this level which is altogether beyond [elicitation via] “arousal from below” is drawn down when it is preceded by the toil and inheritance elaborated above [which is the notion of “with one’s study in hand”⁸³⁶].^{cdvi} As a result one is also given this [transcendent] aspect as a gift as well.

Generally speaking, this is the overall distinction between the revealed [aspects of] Torah and the interiority of Torah.^{cdvii} The revealed Torah is Torah as it becomes measured and limited.

⁸³³ *Ma'amarey admor ha-emtsa'i, Devarim*, vol. I, 10 ff.

⁸³⁴ *bAvodah zarah*, 3b.

⁸³⁵ *bEruvin*, 65a.

⁸³⁶ *bPesahim*, 50a.

Thus it is stated in the Talmud [Tractate] *Menahot* that it is conceivable that a person should study the entire Torah.⁸³⁷ It follows that there is an aspect of Torah that is characterized by limitation. Yet, it is stated, ‘Longer than earth is her measure, and wider than the sea.’^{838cdviii} Moreover, ‘I was with him etc. as a delight etc. before him’^{839,cdix}; this refers to the level of the interiority of Torah.^{cdx}

This is the notion of *panim* and *aḥor* within Torah, namely the interiority and the revealed aspects of Torah. The *panim* aspect of Torah irradiates within the *aḥor* aspect as well. From these two levels of *panim* and *aḥor* within Torah, there then extends the two aspects of *panim* and *aḥor* down to the souls, as well as the fact that the *panim* of souls irradiate the *aḥor*.

X

The [above] also explains the verse, ‘Your statutes were melodies for me in the house of my lodging.’⁸⁴⁰ Our Sages say that David was punished for this.⁸⁴¹ The reason is given in *Liqutey torah*,⁸⁴² *Torah or*,⁸⁴³ and several places^{844,cdxi}. He was punished for referring to the Torah as “melodies,”^{cdxii} because while the Torah possesses an element of “melodies,” there is, however, a level of Torah beyond this, namely “song.”^{cdxiii} [“Song”] is in fact incomparably loftier [than “melodies”]. It is the “delight, before him,” the “song” of the Holy One, which is ‘concealed from the eyes of all living beings.’^{845cdxiv} This is the interior element of Torah.

This aspect of Torah, its capacity as “delight before him,” is beyond any measure or limitation.^{cdxv} It is incomparably loftier than the “melodies” of Torah. Yet, it still extends below.^{cdxvi} Therefore David was told “Do you call them ‘melodies?!’” (since he praised the Torah for being melodies), in a tone of wonderment. For the Torah contains an element that is incomparably loftier than its being “melodies,” [which is] the “delight before him” element, the “song” and “flavor”^{cdxvii} of Torah.

This explains why [David] was made to suffer forgetfulness in particular, this memory lapse relating to the subject of [the imperative to] carry the ark upon the shoulder.^{cdxviii} This punishment was measure for measure.⁸⁴⁶

The idea: The significance of the ark is that it contained the tablets, as it is written ‘There was nothing in the ark but the two tablets.’⁸⁴⁷ The tablets were characterized by their obverse (*panim*) being indistinguishable from their reverse (*aḥor*). It is stated in the Yerushalmi,⁸⁴⁸ commenting on the verse ‘They were inscribed on both sides, on this side and that etc.’⁸⁴⁹ that they could be read from any side, on all four sides etc.^{cdxix} This indicates that (it was entirely *panim* and) there was no distinction between front and back.

⁸³⁷ 99b.

⁸³⁸ Job, 11:9.

⁸³⁹ Proverbs, 8:30.

⁸⁴⁰ Psalms, 119:54.

⁸⁴¹ Midrash Numbers Rabbah, 4:20; b*Sotah*, 35a.

⁸⁴² Portion *Bamidbar*, 18c.

⁸⁴³ Portion *Miqets*, 31c ff.

⁸⁴⁴ *We-kakhah*, *ibid*; and elsewhere.

⁸⁴⁵ Job, 28:21.

⁸⁴⁶ b*Sanhedrin*, 90a; and see b*Sotah*, 8b ff.

⁸⁴⁷ II Chronicles, 5:10.

⁸⁴⁸ y*Sheqalim*, 6:1.

⁸⁴⁹ Exodus, 32:15.

This is likewise the significance of the commandment to carry the ark upon the [priests'] shoulders. The concept is to join the shoulder, the hinder aspect, to the ark, and thereby to subordinate it to the ark (where the tablets were contained).^{cdxxx} This is akin to the state of the tablets within the ark themselves. Although [Torah is] 'a scroll inscribed fore and aft,'⁸⁵⁰ nevertheless, on account of the tablets within the ark, the obverse and reverse (of the scroll) are unified and become [entirely] one (i.e. *panim*).^{cdxxxi} The joining of shoulder to ark (containing the tablets) is a similar dynamic. From this unification of *panim* and *aḥor* achieved by the tablets, one must extend the same phenomenon into Torah study as well. The *aḥor* of Torah (the "revealed" Torah) [must] be united with its *panim* (the interiority of Torah).^{cdxxxii}

For this reason, David was stricken specifically with forgetfulness. For, "there is no forgetting before your glorious throne."^{cdxxxiii} On the interior level, forgetting is not possible. When one is engrossed (*ligt*)^{cdxxxiv} in some matter to the core of one's soul, it is not possible that they will then be distracted from it. It is only when one's assiduity to a topic is in a manner of *aḥor*, with a "hind" level of attention [that forgetfulness is possible]. Therefore he was punished with forgetting, measure for measure, since he praised the Torah regarding its aspect of *aḥor*, its "melodies," alone. This is [also] why the punishment was forgetting relating to the commandment of carrying the ark upon the shoulder; for the intent of [this commandment] is that via the (tablets of the) Torah, *panim* and *aḥor* (of Torah) become one, so that it is entirely *panim*, as above that 'they were inscribed etc. from this side and that etc.'^{cdxxxv}

XI

Now Torah study must be preceded by (in the words of the Talmud) "first blessing over the Torah."^{851cdxxxvi} This refers to one's divine worship that precedes Torah study. This is the meaning of Abba Binyamin's prayer that his prayers be in proximity to his bed.^{852cdxxxvii} The rationale for this was, as the Alter Rebbe explains, so that his Torah study follow his prayers.⁸⁵³ Prayers prior to Torah study are analogous to the notion of blessing over the Torah first, blessing (*borkhu*) (etymologically related to drawing down) into Torah etc.^{cdxxxviii}

It follows that, just as with Torah, the *panim* irradiates the level of *aḥor* as well (as above at length), it must be similarly regarding the divine service (of prayer) that precedes it. This refers to the [dual] divine service of Superior Unity and Inferior Unity.^{cdxxxix}

XII

The idea,^{cdxxx} as elaborated in *Quntres ets ha-ḥayyim*:⁸⁵⁴ Divine service motivated by Inferior Unity is in a manner of 'After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go,' while divine service motivated by Superior Unity is in a manner of [utter] abnegation of one's existence^{cdxxxix} (meaning, that the Superior Unity and the Inferior Unity are the levels of *panim* and *aḥor* of divine service).^{cdxxxii}

⁸⁵⁰ See *bEruvin*, 21a.

⁸⁵¹ *bNedarim*, 81a; *bBava metsi'a*, 85b.

⁸⁵² *bBerakhot*, 5b.

⁸⁵³ *Liqqutey torah*, portion *Berakhah*, 96b; see *ibid*, portion *Wa-ethanan*, 4a.

⁸⁵⁴ Ch. 6.

Now, “the Torah speaks to the majority,”^{855cdxxxiii} and especially when [we address] the period of exile.^{cdxxxiv} Divine service is primarily at the level of Inferior Unity (‘After *HaWaYaH* your G-d shall you go’). But even then, there must be a memory of divine service at the level of Superior Unity. [“Memory”^{cdxxxv} is in the manner of remembering ’Amaleq. “Amaleq” contains the letters *mlq*, related to ‘he shall sever (*u-malaq*) its head from the nape of the neck.’⁸³ This indicates that [’Amaleq] derives sustenance from the level of *aḥor*, and his objective is to cause forgetting (as mentioned above, forgetting is due to the state of *aḥor*). Thus Scripture warns about him especially, ‘Remember,’ and “do not forget.”⁸⁵⁶] At least periodically, one’s divine service must be at the level of Superior Unity. So that one’s divine service in the manner of Inferior Unity be sustained, there must be empowerment and irradiation for this from divine service in the manner of Superior Unity. Superior Unity illuminates Inferior Unity.^{cdxxxvi}

The level of Superior Unity (which facilitates the maintenance of divine service at the level of Inferior Unity) is connected to the study of the interiority of the Torah.^{cdxxxvii} Thus it is explained there⁸⁵⁷ that the interiority of Torah is as it is written, ‘Know the G-d of your father,’⁸⁵⁸ meaning to know [G-d’s] magnificence etc. Through this one achieves (as the verse concludes) ‘and serve him with a complete heart,’ one’s divine service reaches perfection.^{cdxxxviii} (This is, as above, [the idea] that the level of *panim* of Torah (the interiority of the Torah) is connected with the *panim* of divine service, divine service in a manner of Superior Unity.)^{cdxxxix}

XIII

Speaking generally, this idea (that the aspect of *panim* must be drawn down into the aspect of *aḥor*) is the notion that the ultimate [divine] intention is that “the primary [place of] the *Shekhinah* should be in the nether realms.”^{cdxl} Thus it is explained in *Pri ets ḥayyim* that all of our actions and labors during the period of exile only reach the level of the externality of *’atiqa qadisha*,^{cdxli} while in the future time-to-come the interior aspect of *’atiqa qadisha* will be disclosed.^{859cdxlii} Yet,^{cdxliii} nevertheless, it is our actions and labors throughout the period of exile that draw down the recompense of the messianic age and the subsequent [ages].^{860cdxliv} It is characterized overall by what is written, ‘Your teacher will no longer be veiled,’⁸⁶¹ ‘And the glory of *HaWaYaH* will be revealed and all flesh will behold together etc.’^{862cdxlv} [This disclosure will be] even to the extent of *panim be-phanim* (face to face),^{cdxlvi} that the interiority of *’atiqa qadisha* will be apparent.

The fact that we can affect this [via our efforts] at this time, is due to having, during the exilic period, the empowerment of the interiority of the Torah (which derives from the interiority of *’atiqa qadisha*), for “those who taste of it merit life.”^{863cdxlvii}

This^{cdxlviii} refers to the revelation of the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov, and the subsequent noble leaders,^{cdxlix} down to the master of the *hillula*.^{cdl}

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid, ch. 7 ff.

⁸⁵⁶ Deuteronomy, 25:17-19; and see *Torah or*, 85a ff.

⁸⁵⁷ In *Quntres ets ha-ḥayyim*, ch. 13.

⁸⁵⁸ I Chronicles, 28:9.

⁸⁵⁹ Gate of *qeri’at shema’*, ch. 15.

⁸⁶⁰ *Tanya*, ch. 37.

⁸⁶¹ Isaiah, 30:20.

⁸⁶² Ibid, 40:5.

⁸⁶³ See *Liqutṭey sihot*, vol. XV, 282; and in references there.

The [study of] interiority of Torah results in *biṭṭul* out of existence.^{cdli} This results in a type of divine service that is characterized overall by Superior Unity. Such a mode of divine service is associated with the inner dimension of the soul, as explained in various places. This constitutes an immediate preparation^{cdlii} that [a phenomenon] similar to this (to such a mode of divine service) should ensue, in the manner of the Holy One's measure, which is "measure for measure."¹³¹ This means that through "your wellsprings burst forth – specifically – to the outside" (which is the aspect of the interiority of Torah that derives from the interiority of *'atiqa qadisha* etc. which leads to divine service from the interiority of the soul etc.), "the master will arrive," referring to the messianic king^{cdliii} –

This is "measure for measure." It is known that the characteristic of the messiah is that of *yehidah*,^{864cdliv} and so too the interiority of Torah is likewise the *yehidah* within Torah. In the same vein, divine service during [the messianic era] will derive from the *yehidah* within the soul. [Then redemption is in a peaceful manner,^{cdlv} as it is written, 'he has redeemed my soul in peace etc.,'^{865cdlvi} this verse being from the portion of Psalms [recited on] *Yud Shevat*.^{cdlvii} This has been explained above in the previous discourses at length.⁸⁶⁶]

(which is the disclosure of the interiority of *'atiqa qadisha*, the primary *Shekhinah*,^{cdlviii} in the nether realms).

XIV

This idea (of drawing the aspect of *panim* into *aḥor*, like the *yod* within the *dalet*)^{cdlix} is also the overall gist of the master of the *hillula*'s discourse,^{cdlx} which begins with "I have arrived in my garden – my wedding canopy, the place of my primary [residence] at the start,' for the primary [location of] the *Shekhinah* was in the nether realms." It is obvious that when it is written (in the Midrash) "the primary *Shekhinah*,"^{cdlxi} the intention is the interiority of the *Shekhinah*.⁸⁶⁷ This relates to the internal [aspects] above, even up to the interiority of *'atiqa qadisha*.

This level must reside specifically "in the nether realms." It is human efforts that accomplish this.^{cdlxii} This is to the extent that our divine service effects, as he continues at the discourses conclusion,⁸⁶⁸

May it be [G-d's] will that it should be so for us.^{cdlxiii} that we raise up the "hosts of *HaWaYaH*,"^{cdlxiv} and the secreted stores are opened. Then all the precious treasure within the storehouses, which [the king's] ancestors amassed as well as what the king himself [accumulated], is distributed to the military men via the military officers and the army generals. This refers, in general, to "your heads of your tribes," the heads and noble leaders of Israel of each generation.^{cdlxv} For "an extension of Moses is in each generation,"⁸⁶⁹ down to the noble leader of our generation, the master of the *hillula*. May "they awake and sing, they who

⁸⁶⁴ See *Quntres 'inyanah shel torat ha-ḥassidut*, sec. 5, fn36; sec. 6, fn43.

⁸⁶⁵ Psalms, 55:19.

⁸⁶⁶ Discourse *Padah be-shalom* of 10 Kislev (*Sepher ha-ma'amarim* – 5737, 78 ff.); of 20 Kislev (ibid, 101 ff.); discourse *Qatonti* of 19 Kislev (ibid, 89 ff.).

⁸⁶⁷ See also discourse *Bati le-ganni* – 5711, ch. 1 (*Torat menaḥem* – *sepher ha-ma'amarim bati le-ganni*, vol. 1, 7 ff.).

⁸⁶⁸ Ch. 10.

⁸⁶⁹ *Zohar* III, 273a; *Tiqquney zohar*, *Tiqqun* 69, 112a; 114a; *Tanya*, ch. 42.

dwell in the dust,⁸⁷⁰ he among them, and may he lead us upright^{cdlxvi} to our land soon, literally, to greet our righteous messiah.^{cdlxvii} [The messiah] will teach the entire nation Torah,⁸⁷¹ the interiority of Torah, *ba- 'agala didan*.^{cdlxviii}

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⁸⁷⁰ Isaiah, 26:19.

⁸⁷¹ *Liqutey torah*, portion *Tsaw*, 17a; *Sha'ar ha-emunah*, ch. 56.

ⁱ I have tried to preserve as much as possible the flavor of the original Hebrew. As such, I am leaving most of my clarifications for the notes. I have inserted bracketed words where I felt the text would be unintelligible without them. Parentheses are used when providing a Hebrew word that is pertinent to the text, or the translation of a Hebrew word.

The footnotes are translations of those provided by the editors at *Va'ad hanahot be-lahaq*. The footnotes in bold type are the Rebbe's original annotations for the 5710 edition.

ⁱⁱ This chapter continues a discussion begun in the previous chapter. A comparison is made between the Hebrew letters *dalet* (ד) and *resh* (ר). These two letters are similar in their design, as well as in the meaning of their names (*dalet* is related to the word *dal*, indigent; *resh* is related to *rash*, impoverished). The former is understood to represent a positive poverty capable of sanctity, while the latter is seen as an entirely negative, condemnable poverty. This is exemplified in the Midrashic narrative regarding R. Meir, where he was warned to beware when writing a Torah scroll “not to confuse a *dalet* for a *resh*, and you would end up destroying worlds,” since the *dalet* is the final letter of the word *ehad* (one, as in “G-d is One”), while if replaced with a *resh* it would spell *aher* (another deity) (Leviticus *Rabbah*, 19:2). The factor that distinguishes between them and which thus determines the letter's capacity for sanctity is the *yod* (י), i.e. the iota of extra ink, which is attached to the back of the *dalet*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lit. “all that is in heaven and on earth [is His].” Here translated as “*kol* that is in heaven and on earth,” i.e. *kol* is that which unifies heaven and earth. Rayyats does not explain the connection between the letter *yod* and the Sefirah of *yesod*. It does not seem to be directly related to the concept of “with a *yod* was the world-to-come created” (see the Rebbe's discussion in 5737, III; see *ibid*, reference to *Tsemakh tsedek*'s discussion of *yod* as *hokhmah* and as *yesod*).

^{iv} See Rashi, Genesis 1:1.

^v Lit. “the pauper had nothing.” In Hebrew, *en kol*, which also translates as “has not *kol*.” Thus the *rash*, like the *resh*, lacks *kol*, namely *yesod*, represented by the *yud* present at the back of the *dalet* but absent in the *resh*.

^{vi} Speech symbolizes the tenth Sefirah, *malkhut*. The *resh* lacks *yesod* entirely, and while it does possess speech (*malkhut*), this is present in a most concealed manner. See, *inter alia*, *Bati le-ganni*, vol. I, 134-35.

^{vii} See Rashi, *ad loc*.

^{viii} The implication of *kol* is that everything exists in a unified fashion, while *rav* implies many disparate entities (*ribbuy*, *rabbim*); see *Bati le-ganni*, vol. I, 240 ff. (5717, VII).

^{ix} *Ze'ir* = minor. *Az'irat garma* = she diminishes herself. This expression is used in the Zohar (?) regarding *malkhut*. See Genesis *Rabbah* (?) לכי ומעטי עצמך.

^x Num. ?? requires that a total of seventy bullocks be sacrificed over the course of the Sukkot festival. On the first day, thirteen bullocks were offered, twelve on the second day etc. until seven on the seventh day. Thus they progressively diminish. These are understood to represent the seventy nations of the world [Rashi, *ibid*]. Here they are associated with the seventy archangels that determine the fate of each nation [see ??]. Thus the poverty of the *rash* is associated with the *kefirim*, those represented by the seventy bullocks of Sukkot. (The Zohar reads *kefirim* as if it said *ke-parim*, “like bullocks.”)

^{xi} “The king's sanctuary.” A book by R. Shalom Busaglo (Marrakesh, 1700 – London, 1780), a commentary on the Zohar.

^{xii} I am not sure what “both” refers to.

^{xiii} When the light does not radiate directly, but there is a radiation of the radiation, its source may be obscured, and that which is not holy becomes possible. Habad thought discusses this at length in many places; e.g. ??

^{xiv} Since Jacob (a g-dly man and the possessor of *kol*) was the reason for the blessing in the river, Pharaoh should have attributed his bounty to G-d. Instead, he took credit for himself.

^{xv} *Par'oh* = פרעה; *ha-oref* = הערפ. “Back” is another synonym for externality.

^{xvi} Translation of a handwritten note by the Rebbe containing shorthand notes for the discourse. Annotations by Lahak. [One can also have a glimpse of the Rebbe's preparation of these discourses through analyzing his preparatory notes.]

^{xvii} The Midrash interprets the word *le-gani* (lit. to my garden) as *le-ginuni* (to my matrimonial canopy, i.e. the wedding canopy of groom and bride) [see Ben Yehuda, s.v. גנין]. Thus this is not just arriving at a given location, but at the primary “home” of the speaker. Possibly the possessive form suggests that this place was already “my

place” before this coming, thus from the very beginning. “Coming” then means “returning.” The rabbis assume (as do the Hasidic masters) that the speaker here is G-d.

^{xviii} The Midrash understands the “garden” not as the bride (the Community of Israel) herself, but as a literal space, the physical world. The continuation of this paragraph is based on the continuation of the Midrash’s narrative.

^{xix} While not essential to the argument of the discourses, this phrase is significant. In his first discourse of 5711, the Rebbe associated this phrase in his predecessor’s discourse with the fact that his is the seventh generation of Habad. Similarly, it is noted in our discourse that it discusses the seventh chapter of the original *Bati le-gani*.

^{xx} *Hamshakhah* in Habad parlance refers to drawing down (*mashakh*) divine revelation into the physical realm. This is in dialectic relation to *ha’ala’ah*, elevation (‘*alah*) of the physical to the divine (see below). The efforts of the righteous who drew the *shekhinah* from the seventh heaven down to earth are acts of *hamshakhah*. The dialectic of *ha’ala’ah* and *hamshakhah* is one of the fundamental principles of Habad thought, and recurs regularly throughout the series of *Bati le-gani*.

^{xxi} See Midrash.

^{xxii} Habad thought teaches (see sources cited) that the word *be-tokham* means not (only) “among them” via the Tabernacle in their midst, but literally “within them,” the individual comprising a tabernacle themselves.

^{xxiii} *Hilula* is Aramaic for “wedding feast.” The *Zohar* refers to the passing of R. Shimon as *hilula*, and from there it is applied to the deaths of other saints, particularly those related to the Kabbalah. Various practices have been associated with the marking of a *hilula*, e.g. the pilgrimage to Miron on Lag B’omer. Our *hemshekh* is associated with the *hilula* of R. Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn (1880-1950), sixth Habad rebbe. It is he that is referred to as the “Master of the *hilula*,” and his discourse (*Bati le-gani* – 5710, published in anticipation of 10 *Shevat*, 5710) as the “discourse of the *hilula*.”

^{xxiv} A common Kabbalistic moniker for the forces of impurity and evil, predicated on the notion that “this opposite this has the L-rd made” (Ecc. ??:?), that evil is the counterpart of the divine realm.

^{xxv} “Subdued” – *itkafiya*; “transformed” – *it’hafkha*. In Habad thought, these are two stages in divine service, roughly analogous to the levels of *benoni* and *zaddik* in *Tanya* (see *Bati le-gani* – 5715, part VI). The first is where one overcomes one’s desire for evil despite its presence; the second is where one’s evil is transformed into good.

^{xxvi} “Rises up” (*istalek*), related also to the departure (*histalkut*) or passing of the saint. In Habad thought, “rises up” here refers to the presence of the Glory within the world in an elevated manner. An analogy is drawn with the departure of the *zaddik*, which does not suggest removal of their presence.

^{xxvii} “Throughout all the worlds” in the quote is interpreted as “in all worlds – equally.”

^{xxviii} In the Midrash the words *ikar shekhinah* are used, signifying the primary locus of the *shekhinah* (see our translation at the beginning of the discourse). The Rebbe interprets this phrase as referring to the level of *shekhinah* that is present, the “primary *shekhinah*” (see *Bati le-gani* – 5711).

^{xxix} See *Bati le-gani* – 5731.

^{xxx} *Re’ah niho’ah*. Habad thought relates this to drawing downward from above as a dialectical response to the elevation of the sacrifice, based on the term’s relation to *nahat ru’ah* (settling of the spirit; see Rashi, Lev. ??) and to *nehot darga* (descend a level); see e.g. *Likkutei torah*, emor?.

^{xxxi} The material of the panels has significance for the appropriate way to construct the inner Temple within the individual. Rayatz’s explanation is that, through the association of *shittim* and *shtut*, the inner sanctuary is to be constructed of “holy nonsense” (*shtut de-kedushah*).

^{xxxii} *Qerashim* is another word used for the material used in the construction of the Tabernacle. *Shittim* (acacia) is the type of wood, while *qeresh* is the panel made from such wood. This word is also significant for the notion of the transformation of *shtut d’le’umat zeh* to *shtut d’kedushah*.

^{xxxiii} קרש.

^{xxxiv} ד is similar to ג. The difference is the slight protrusion on the right edge of the roof.

^{xxxv} “Hear, O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one (אהד – *ehad*): If you make of the *dalet* a *resh* (instead of אהד – one, אהר (*aher*) – another), you destroy the entire world. For you shall not prostrate yourself to another (אהר – *aher*) god: If you make of the *resh* a *dalet*, you destroy the entire world.” Note the Midrash’s discussion of the significance of the letter *yud* earlier in this passage.

^{xxxvi} *Bitul* is a recurring and fundamental concept in Hasidism in general and especially in Habad. It implies cessation, nullification, submission, and/or abnegation. In Habad thought it is the prerequisite for holiness and G-dliness, and is the dialectical opposite of ego (*yeshut*) (see e.g. *Tanya*, ch. 6). The pristine point that lacks extension into a line or an area of space represents withdrawal and lack of self-assertion.

^{xxxvii} Thus far, the Rebbe summarized the themes of the first six chapters of *Bati le-gani* – 5710. He now begins to discourse on the content of the seventh chapter.

^{xxxviii} The *yud* is essentially an unexpanded point. Thus each letter takes shape from an initial point. Note that in the Hebrew alphabet of the Assyrian script used in writing a Torah scroll, many letters incorporate *yuds* in their shapes (e.g. aleph, gimmel, he, etc.).

^{xxxix} See Tanya (ch. ?) that the pleasure of the afterlife consists of comprehension of divinity. Thus that state of existence is created by letters, which “bring” revelation. These letters begin with the *yud*. Thus the *yud* is the bedrock of the world-to-come.

^{xl} This is not spelled out in the discourse of 5710; however, it is the Rebbe’s insight, possibly based on the idea that the Sefirah of *yesod* (here associated with the *yud*) is the locus of bestowal (see “Chapter 7” endnote iii), while the province of reception is typically associated with the Sefirah of *malkhut*.

^{xli} In the previous chapter (of 5710) it was explained that the recipient must be in a state of *bitul* in order to receive. This is akin to a student, who “must at the time [of the master’s expounding] simply receive the master’s words, and only later consider the matter of comprehension,” instead of “thinking about comprehending the matter” at the time that the master is holding forth. This is more readily understandable, since the student is in a state of withdrawal when receiving from the master. In this discourse the Rebbe introduces the not-readily-intuitive idea that the master, too, must achieve a state of *bitul* in order to bestow, despite simultaneously having to assert and express themselves.

^{xlii} R. Israel b. Eliezer Ba’al Shem Tov, putative founder of the Hasidic movement (c.1700-1760). The Rebbe cites a teaching from each of the Ḥabad rebbes, as well as from the founders of Hasidism, the Ba’al Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezeritch, in each *Bosi le-ganni* discourse.

^{xliii} The brackets and italic type (here and below) insert a lettered footnote in the Lahak version that draws on the Rebbe’s own notes for this discourse (see above, 1-2).

^{xliiii} The parentheses are the Rebbe’s interpretation of the prompt for the Besht’s teaching. The divine name *Elokim* is associated with severity (*gevurah*) which also has the implication of withholding, connoting concealment of the Creator from creation. Light connotes revelation and bestowal. (See, e.g., Tanya, Sha’ar ha-yihud vеха-emunah, ??).

^{xliiii} A colloquial appellation for G-d, lit. “The Name, may He be blessed.” It is less commonly found in original Habad teachings, which tend to be more precise regarding the specific name applied to the divine in any given context.

^{xliiii} I.e., G-d’s “saying” effects creation. Speaking light into being through the filter of concealment tones it down so that the universe can tolerate it.

^{xliiii} R. Dov Baer b. Avraham, Maggid (preacher) of Mezeritch (c. 1710-1772), foremost Hasidic leader in the generation after the Ba’al Shem Tov, and master to many of the early Hasidic leaders including R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

^{xliiii} A similar thought is derived from two more Scriptural passages. *Ve-yehi ohr* (“and there was light”) alludes to *va-yehi* (anguish) preceding the light. (*Va-yehi* is read midrashically as “*vay yehi*” (“there became woe”).) Likewise “there was evening,” alluding to the concealment of *zimzum*, enables “there was morning,” the arrival of light.

^{xliiii} According to Lurianic teaching, prior to the *zimzum* there was an infinite light that filled all space, such that worlds could not exist. Thus *zimzum* was a necessary concealment to allow for the existence of a light which the worlds could tolerate without being obliterated. The two times “light” is mentioned in the verse allude to these two types of light.

¹ This parable illustrates that, while *zimzum* itself is an ostensibly negative phenomenon, it is at its core an act of love. The father constricts himself to relate to his young son, in order to interact with him and be “with” him. Thus *zimzum* occurs to allow G-d to be “with” creation.

ⁱⁱ According to the Maggid’s interpretation, the verse is read “and *hokhmah* is found from *ayin*. See (Mayse (dis.) 13-14 ff.) about the shift in the location of *ayin* by the Maggid in contrast to classical Kabbalah.

ⁱⁱⁱ See (*bSanhedrin* ??).

ⁱⁱⁱ See Tanya, (40? Shaar hayihud vеха-emunah 5? Kuntres aharon?). The reward in the afterlife is the effect of the service in this life, not merely payment.

^{iv} Elijah’s statement is interpreted as referring to his soul’s state prior to his birth (“before whom I stood” past tense). The state was “standing,” a state of prayer, which is removed from the concerns of this world (see Tanya אִינְהָ מִהֲרַרְתָּ בְּצִרְכֵי הַגּוֹף). This is extrapolated to the state of every individual soul as well.

^{iv} *Yeridah zorekh aliyah*, also a basic principle in Habad thought. The soul can only reach its true potential through the experience in the body.

^{vi} *No’am havayah*. The divine name used here is the Tetragrammaton, spelled in Kabbalistic and Hasidic texts by transposing the letters, so *HaVaYaH*. The deliberate use of this name here is explained below.

^{lvii} Since the soul's recompense is that it is allowed to "gaze at the pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*," the state of the afterlife is created by (the first letter of) that same name. (The discourse does not attempt to reconcile this interpretation with the second part of the *hazalic* saying, "by the *hei* was this world created." An interpretation of this may be found in Tanya, ריעש דוד שם.)

^{lviii} Pleasantness = *no'am*; pleasure = *oneg/ta'anug*.

^{lix} The intent of the verse is that G-d derive pleasure from the "work of our hands."

^{lx} A typical move in Habad thought is to obtain theological insights via psychological insights.

^{lxi} Habad thought differentiates between כוחות פנימיים (internal faculties) and כוחות מקיפים (surrounding or transcendent faculties). The internal faculties consist of the emotional and intellectual capacities, while the surrounding faculties consist of רצון (will) and תענוג (pleasure). Unlike the internal faculties, located primarily in the heart (emotions) and brain (intellect), these latter faculties are ubiquitous throughout the person. Additionally, they are of greater potency than the internal faculties, potentially driving a person to extremes. Among the two, pleasure is considered one with the soul itself, even more so than the willpower.

^{lxii} In this discourse, pleasure is contrasted with joy. Their commonality is their effect of expansion. However, the object and method of expansion differs between them.

^{lxiii} Joy is not limited to a specific bodily location, like will and pleasure. It extends even as far as the feet (the most remote part of the body), evidencing its limitlessness. It also has the nature of revelation, for it is a response to revelation, and has the property of causing self-expression.

^{lxiv} "The internality of the faculties" is distinct from "the internal faculties." The latter refer to the intellect and emotions (see note lxiii). The former refer to the state of the faculties as they are within the essence of the soul, where they are in a state of perfection.

^{lxv} While pleasure also affects the feet ("fattens the bone" – see sources cited), it affects not in a manner of outward expression, but of internal enrichment. Pleasure does not induce movement, quite the contrary; but it enhances the "bone" itself. (It is likely no accident that *atzem* is used both for "bone" as well as "essence.")

^{lxvi} The faculties "as they are" means in their ordinary state (e.g. one does not become more intelligent, but through joy might feel inclined to advertise what one knows). The "internality and essence" of the faculties refers to their existence in an ideal or perfect state, as they are presumed to be at the level of the essence (e.g. one might be capable of comprehending a concept that is normally beyond one's capacity; see ?? regarding יפה כח הבן מכה האב). The Rebbe posits that the experience of *ta'anug* has a transformative effect on the ordinary faculties as well.

^{lxvii} As something not available to the soul in the routine course of things, this justifies the soul's descent and gives a clue as to what the soul gains ("ascent") through its "descent" over its initial state prior to the descent.

^{lxviii} This is a paraphrase of the beginning of *Etz hayim* (?), one of the descriptions of R. Isaac Luria's doctrine of *zimzum* (see next note).

^{lxix} "Constriction," in which the Infinite Light that filled the void was moved to the periphery and the possibility of creation was allowed. As explained here (and elsewhere in Habad teaching), the problem was not one of lack of actual "space" in which to create, but the impossibility of creating "worlds," i.e. entities that would perceive themselves as distinct from G-d. *Zimzum* obscures the divine light so that self-perception becomes possible.

^{lxx} The concept as the master understands it cannot be transmitted to the pupil. It must be given over in simplified and possibly partial manner. The teaching that is customized to the pupil's capacity is not readily available to the master, despite the latter's full comprehension of the material. Rather, there must be an independent internal process in the master's mind to identify the matter that is appropriate to the disciple's capacity, which entails shifting the intellectual focus away from the master's own perception of the subject. This process is the analogy to *zimzum*.

^{lxxi} Identifying the material that is on the student's level is only an initial stage, but the result of this process cannot be transmitted directly to the pupil. The master must now turn to the disciple and determine the latter's capacity for learning. After this there is the actual transferral of information to the disciple's mind.

^{lxxii} In the Hebrew, "kernel" is *nekudah* (point), and "area" is *shetah*. These are geometric concepts found in Kabbalistic writing (source?) as a triad of *nekudah*, *kav*, *shetah* (point, line, and area). These are, respectively, non-dimensional, one-dimensional, and two-dimensional. This triad maps onto the three (different) letters of the Tetragrammaton, *yud*, *vav*, and *hei*. Thus the progression from point to line to area describes the evolutionary system by which divine light extends and emanates into creation. Here these concepts are located within the analogy of master and disciple. Note that there are two "areas" in this process, one as the master estimates it, and then the actual area of the recipient. See below in this section.

^{lxxiii} Hebrew: *seder hishtalshelut* (order of progressive lowering down). *Shalshelut* is a chain, and lowering a chain or rope downward is *shilshul*. In Kabbalah the progression of the emanation from the divine through all the levels of the worlds (generally all stages of emanation that occur after the *zimzum*) is referred to as *seder*

hishtalshelut. I have glossed it as “evolutionary system of the worlds,” because this progression entails 1) development, as the light is modified at each stage to create progressively coarser beings, and 2) a system by which the light may descend from one level to another, generally following the schema of the Tetragrammaton, or in Habad terminology, “constriction, expansion, extension, expansion.” *Seder hishtalshelut* represents an arena in which (logical) rules are meaningful, where cause leads to effect, action to reaction. Beyond this system there is no predictability.

^{lxxiv} Note that the latter *hei* is referred to as the “**recipient’s** area.” This is opposed to the first *hei*, which is the area of the bestower.

^{lxxv} Light is by definition limited, since it must start at the point that it differentiates itself from its source. Nevertheless, *ohr ein sof* is both the “light that is infinite,” as well as the “light of the one who is infinite.” The principle of light, as explained in Habad thought, is that “light resembles the luminary.” Light’s essential characteristic is that it conveys all the properties of its source to “others.” At the same time, light is in no way identifiable with the luminary, for its existence and significance only begins at the point and to the extent that it is differentiated from the luminary. Thus the “light of the Infinite” is also “infinite light.”

^{lxxvi} Within the infinite essence there must be both the capacity for infinity and for finitude. Thus there are really two kinds of light that emanate from the essence; one expressing its infinite capacity, and one expressing its capacity for finitude (which is part of its infinite nature). However, the light of finitude must be recognized not as merely an expression of the essence’s infinite capacity, but as an actual agent of creating finite beings. This is why *zimzum* is necessary.

^{lxxvii} As alluded to above, there is constriction that happens at every stage of development. Usually this is merely a toning down of the light, so that the next level be somewhat more opaque than the preceding one. However, the initial *zimzum* had to be a total break with what came before, moving from “infinite” to “finite.” Thus it is described as “removal” (*siluk*), total obscuring of the light. Once this was accomplished, a ray (*kav*, “line”) was radiated back into the void, from which the *hishtalshelut* developed. Note that the term for the passing of the saint, *histalkut*, is of the same root as *siluk*.

^{lxxviii} The next paragraph will elaborate on the two constrictions mentioned here.

^{lxxix} Although limited, it was as close to unlimited as conceivable, i.e. of enormous abundance.

^{lxxx} We have here *zimzum* in both senses; total removal, and toning down.

^{lxxxi} In addition to the two senses and stages of *zimzum* mentioned here (as in the previous note), a third element is referred to here: The very distinction between inner and outer, which is also a consequence of the emanated state of light. One way of understanding this is to say that any light by definition has two components: its origin, and its telos. To the extent that the light is oriented toward its origin, it is in an “inner” state; to the extent that it is oriented toward its telos, it is “outer.”

^{lxxxii} It is unclear to me why the language here suggests a new topic, when this would seem to continue the previous topic of *zimzum* as it relates to creation. Perhaps the distinction is that earlier the discourse discussed the process of the descent of the light to become the energy of the world, relating to the process of creation. Here, the discussion is regarding the entire arc of history, and the unfolding of the original *yud* (in this case the divine delight) occurs in the eschaton, only after the “divine service of Israel in observance of the Torah and its commandments.”

^{lxxxiii} The notion of a “desire” for worlds is referred to in the beginning of *Etz hayim*. Here the Rebbe adduces a Midrash which describes creation as being a result of “yearning,” which he equates with pleasure.

^{lxxxiv} Ironically, the intensity of desire and pleasure would smother any possibility of actual, identifiable independent entities.

^{lxxxv} Heb.: *Silek*.

^{lxxxvi} Yiddish in the original transcript.

^{lxxxvii} I.e. the pre-*zimzum* desire for worlds represents the “light of limitation” within the Infinite. As it is in its pristine state, it cannot be actualized as worlds. Thus *zimzum* is required to a) obscure the infinite light, and b) tone down the “desire” etc. Thus, after the *zimzum*, the beginning of creation is with an iota (Heb.: *nekudah*).

^{lxxxviii} The *roshem* is the trace left within the void after the infinite light has been removed (*Ets hayim*).

^{lxxxix} *Adam kadmon* (primordial man) refers to the very first level after the *zimzum*, where the entirety of the universe is comprised “in one (i.e. undifferentiated) glance.” It is analogous to the thought of the master regarding the capacity of the disciple.

^{xc} The Lurianic schema posits that at each level, the light must be encased in “vessels” which contain, define, and limit the light. This would be analogous to soul and body. (The vessels are said to result from the *roshem*.) The vessels are receptacles, thus *shetah ha-mekabel*. See *Mystical Concepts*, 117 ff.

^{xci} Two states are described: the state of matters as they are originally created, and the state of matters as they are developed through human efforts. It is human service of the divine that develops the seminal *yud* into the fully-unfurled world-to-come.

^{xcii} For, as mentioned, the “descent” must be for the purpose of “ascent,” i.e. to a level beyond that which the soul originally occupied. The conventional notion of the world-to-come as reward for good deeds in this life or of closeness to G-d does not adequately account for what the soul lacked prior to its descent.

^{xciii} Pleasure is not a superficial experience, and can only be excited through some extraordinary impetus. The soul has no access to the divine pleasure in its primordial state. The “pleasantness of *HaVaYaH*” which is “gazed at” in the world-to-come is the anticipated pleasure derived from creation that was compressed into the *yud*. Thus, the world-to-come is the soul’s appreciation of the pleasure G-d has from the existence of the world, and more specifically from the observance of the Torah by the Jewish people. When this observance is realized, so is the divine pleasure, and this is experienced as the world-to-come.

^{xciv} The use of the plural in Yiddish and Hebrew is common even when speaking of a single, anonymous entity. It is similar to the passive in English (“that are wished to be bestowed”).

^{xcv} Based on statements made in Zohar, e.g. at Zohar II, 116a. This Targum is widely cited in Ḥabad texts.

^{xcvi} Until here the citation from the discourse of 5710. See our notes there. For the Sephirot, see J. I. Schochet, *Mystical Concepts*, 59 ff.

^{xcvii} Thus we have three notions in the *yud* (as is articulated below): the constriction of the recipient to be able to receive, the constriction of the bestower to be able to bestow, and the concept of *yesod* which acts as the binding agent between the two.

^{xcviii} In my understanding, the first quality of *yesod* simply embodies the state of readiness of recipient and bestower already stated. In addition, it acts as the conjoiner of the two. As the sign of the phallus (“the culmination of the body, the sign of the holy covenant,” see below), *yesod* is the point of conjunction between the upper nine Sephirot and the (feminine, recipient) Sephirah of *malkhut*.

^{xcix} R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi (c1745-1813). In Ḥabad he is known as the *Alter Rebbe* (old rebbe), and in Hebrew, *Admur ha-zaken*.

^c In Hebrew: *zaddik yesod olam*. It may also be read as “the righteous is the (Sephirah of) *yesod* of the world.

^{ci} Joseph is referred to in rabbinic literature as *Yosef ha-zaddik*, primarily due to his restraint in the face of the temptation of his master’s wife. Thus the idea of Joseph as the *zaddik* is associated with the Sephirah of *yesod*, representing the “preservation of the purity of the covenant,” i.e. sexual purity.

^{cii} While occupying the lowest point on the torso, *yesod* draws on and affects even the mind, as below. Similarly the Sephirah of *yesod* relates to even the loftiest Sephirot.

^{ciii} In the original, “the person below.” The term “below” in Ḥabad texts usually refers to the physical realm, while “above” usually refers to the divine realm. Based on the verse in Job (??) “from my flesh I behold G-^d,” Ḥabad thought draws heavily on analogies from the human experience to elucidate esoteric Kabbalistic concepts.

^{civ} Hebrew: *ayn kishuy ela le-da’at*. In the Talmud this reasoning is used to justify the notion that a male can never be deemed coerced with regard to prohibited intercourse, since arousal is controlled by the mind. In our context, this phrase indicates the connection between *yesod* and the Sephirah of *da’at* (awareness, knowledge), one of the upper (intellectual) Sephirot (as distinct from the lower seven emotional Sephirot, of which *yesod* is the sixth; see below in the teaching of the Maggid).

^{cv} Thus we have both sides of the dialectic of *ha’ala’ah* and *hamshakhah*, as above.

^{cvi} In Kabbalistic (philosophical?) physiology, the seminal drop is understood to originate within the father’s brain. In Ḥabad thought it is said to be at its subtlest then (it is unclear to me whether it is physical or substantial at all at that point), and to become progressively more substantial and tangible as it courses down the spine until emerging from the genitals as a physical drop. The seminal drop contains the father’s essence (hence “the choicest part”), for which reason the progeny resembles the father mentally as well as physically.

^{cvii} The Talmud describes R. Hanina b. Dosa as “a servant before the king,” who can enter the king’s presence whenever he wishes (i.e. whose prayers were always accepted), while R. Yohanan b. Zakkai was “a minister before the king” who may only enter the king’s presence by appointment. Each had an advantage. The one was perhaps not as intellectually able, but his sincerity and piety (represented by the attitude of a servant) gave his prayers an advantage. The other was superior in scholarship, but lacked the same level of devotion as the former. This would be an indication of possessing a soul from a higher “root.”

The notion of a soul’s root is Kabbalistic, indicating the point within the Sephirotic and cosmic schema at which the soul originates (here reference is made to the first Sephirah, *hokhmah*, and to the fourth Sephirah, *hesed*). A higher root is associated with the *ha’ala’ah* aspect of *yesod*, while greater sincerity and self-sacrifice is related to

the ability to “draw down” (e.g. effective prayer). The notion of self-sacrifice here refers to the readiness on the part of the person to give up their life for G-d, which in turn motivates an intensity in one’s divine service, but not necessarily actual martyrdom.

^{cviii} Thus he is the most perfect embodiment of the idea of *yesod*.

^{cix} Possibly the reference here is to a) his position of *ben zekunim* (son of Jacob’s old age), interpreted as the one to whom Jacob revealed all of his knowledge (unlike the other brothers; see Rashi), and b) his restraint and subsequent suffering in the affair of his master’s wife.

^{cx} As in physical procreation, “being fruitful” indicates drawing down and propagation of life. In Kabbalistic thought, there is a process of gestation and birth for spiritual entities just as there is for physical beings, facilitated by spiritual “unions” of masculine and feminine aspects (see e.g. Tanya, *kuntres aharon*, ?). These “unions” are brought about through the efforts and divine service of righteous humans, such as Joseph.

^{cx} The key word here is *alei*, “upon,” indicating surpassing or transcending. Joseph transcends the *ayin*, which translates variously as “eye,” “well,” or the sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is the final letter of the word *shema* in the verse “Hear, O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one,” traditionally written in the Torah scroll as a larger than the regular script (*ot rabati*).

^{cxii} Indicating both *ha’ala’ah* and *hamshakhah*.

^{cxiii} Presumably, it is as the “foundation of the world” that the *zaddik* joins heaven and earth.

^{cxiv} *Asiyah* in the Lurianic scheme is the lowest of the four worlds, *atzilut*, *beri’ah*, *yetzirah*, and *asiyah* (See J. I. Schochet, *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, third revised edition (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1988), 105 ff.). It includes (but is not limited to) the physical realm. According to the Maggid, the ultimate *hamshakhah* through the *zaddik* is achieved through the living saint (or possibly a saint of lower stature who is more in tune with the ways of the world; comp. the discussion re: R. Hanina b. Dosa above).

^{cxv} The first Maggidic teaching relates to the notion of the *yud* as signifying *zimzum*. However, it leads into the notion of *yud* as *yesod*, since the objective is to fashion the *zaddik* (here, all of Israel), who actualize the positive intent of the *zimzum*, the *hamshakhah* that is made possible through it.

^{cxvi} Connoting impregnation, or the germination of the kernel in the soil.

^{cxvii} As above, that each letter begins with a *yud*, and that the letters represent *hamshakhot*.

^{cxviii} Yiddish in the original transcript.

^{cxix} See commentary on 5710. Plays on the word *kol* (all) as alluding to the Sefirah *yesod*: the *rash* hasn’t *kol*, while Jacob said “I have *kol*.”

^{cxix} This is a positive aspect of *malkhut*, in addition to the aspect of emptiness alluded to in the etymology of *dalut*.

^{cxxi} Habad thought emphasizes regularly that all creativity stems from holiness and divinity, the only true power and the place of benevolence. *Kelipah* is selfish and not giving, and therefore does not radiate influence without an ulterior motive. Thus speech, and the creation it generates, is characteristic of the divine realm.

^{cxvii} *Kelipah* has no speech of its own, and under circumstances of *kelipah*’s dominance, the speech of the holy realm becomes muted, as elaborated below.

^{cxviii} Heb: *le-atid lavo*.

^{cxvii} “With ten utterances was the world created” [M^Avot, 5:1]. These are Genesis, 1:1, and the nine occurrences of the words *va-yomer elokim* (“and G-d said”) in Genesis, 1. The divine name used throughout this chapter is *Elokim*. See Tanya (??), that this name is associated with *zimzum* and the natural order. The divine name *HaVaYaH*, on the other hand, relates to the supernatural and that which transcends *zimzum*. Thus the problem implied here is that creations which can exist only by dint of the concealment afforded by the *zimzum* of the divine name *Elokim* should not be capable of apprehending the manifestation of *HaVaYaH*.

^{cxv} R. Dovber Schneuri of Lubavitch (1774-1827), son and successor of R. Schneur Zalman, as second Habad rebbe.

^{cxvi} I.e. the word *kadosh* (holy) connotes separateness; see Tanya (ch. 6?). Creations of the divine name *Elokim* may appreciate the distance between themselves and *HaVaYaH*, but would not be able to praise (positively identify the qualities of) *HaVaYaH*. *Hilul* (praise) is related in Habad thought to *be-hilo nero* (Job, ??) (“by the light of his lamp”), illumination and positive understanding.

^{cxvii} It is unclear to me why the praise of the “peoples of the world” is more problematic than all other creations. Further investigation is required of the MR’s discourse.

^{cxviii} There is thus an element of *HaVaYaH* in every creature, endowing it with the capacity to relate to the perspective of this divine name. The distinction between that which emerges from the divine name *Elokim* and that which stems from *HaVaYaH* is thus only the extent to which the element of *HaVaYaH* is occluded or manifest within the respective entities.

^{cxxix} The verse from Psalms can be read as providing an analogy for the two divine names: *HaVaYaH* is “a sun,” while *Elokim* is “a shield.” The sun is said to have a protective sheath around it, according to the Talmud (cited below). Similarly, *Elokim* acts as a filter upon *HaVaYaH*, toning down its light so that the world can tolerate it. Thus, *Elokim* simultaneously obscures *HaVaYaH* as well as facilitate its manifestation. (See Tanya, *Sha’ar ha-yihud ve-ha’emunah*, ch. 4 ff.)

^{cxxx} The Rebbe is emphasizing that *Elokim* is a divine name, and does not in any way represent a challenge to *HaVaYaH*, in the way that evil arguably might. This notion softens the stark dichotomy set up at the outset between those created via *Elokim* and the manifestation of *HaVaYaH*.

^{cxxxii} I.e. they will perceive the divine name *HaVaYaH* in an unmediated manner.

^{cxxxiii} While in the Talmudic passage, the removal of the sun from its sheath will have detrimental consequences for the wicked, according to Habad thought this development in the eschaton describes the general state of being, representing the positive development of the world’s refinement. The creations will no longer require the “sheath” to mediate the “sun’s” light, but will be capable of benefiting from the sun directly.

^{cxxxiiii} *Va-yisharna ha-parot*. The Talmud reads this midrashically as “*va-yasharna ha-parot*,” which translates as “the cows sang.” Further investigation is required to determine whether this might also be an allusion to the “bullocks” mentioned in the discourse of 5710.

^{cxxxv} *Shir hadash* (mas.) as opposed to *shirah hadashah* (fem.). The fact that the Talmud understands the song of the sows to have been specifically this psalm which expresses the song of the eschaton, illustrates the relationship of animals and the praise of *HaVaYaH* in that era in particular. This substantiates the interpretation offered following, that “all flesh” refers not only to all humanity, but even to the animal world.

^{cxxxvi} Having illustrated the one extreme of utter revelation at the eschaton, we can appreciate the deficiency of our present age at the opposite pole.

^{cxxxvii} It is unclear to me what is gained by the (seemingly obvious) etymological relationship between *ne’elamti* and *ilem*, as they are different forms of the same root. Perhaps the Rebbe wishes to emphasize that the state of *ne’elamti* in the era of exile is not merely a cessation of speech, but a total inability to speak, similar to the state of a mute.

^{cxxxviii} R. Menahem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (the first; 1789-1866), grandson of R. Schneur Zalman, and son-in-law and successor to R. Dovber as third Habad rebbe; also known as “the Zemah Zedek” after his collected response.

^{cxxxix} The Hebrew for “ewe” is *rahel*, identical with the name of Jacob’s wife Rachel. The persona of Rachel is closely identified with the Sefirah of *malkhut* (see footnote).

^{cxl} I.e. the muteness is not coincidental to being sheared, but is a consequence of it. The ewe’s shearers silence her in the act, as elaborated below.

^{cxli} *Hizoniyut de-hizoniyut*. Externality is associated in Kabbalistic thought with the realm of evil, where the divine light is occluded.

^{cxlii} The skull represents a *zimzum*, allowing only a minimal vitality to emerge through it, facilitating the hair’s growth, but of such a low frequency as to be able to be shorn painlessly. Thus the soul can be said to be almost entirely occluded within the hair. Hence, the vitality is a “radiance of a radiance” from the soul: the animating energy in any limb is merely a radiance (not the essence) of the soul; for the hair, there is a further remove in that it must pass through the skull.

^{cxliii} Unlike the “natural” *zimzum* of *Elokim* (which was present at the time of creation), during the era of exile the divine energy is truly obstructed by an opposing force, that of *kelipah* and *sitra ahara*.

^{cxliv} *Niddah* means “a wanderer,” an exile. In its narrow connotation, it refers to the menstruating woman, who must remain separated from her husband during her period by Torah law, due to her state of ritual impurity. The use of the word in Lamentations (cited here) has both connotations, and the same is true in this discourse.

^{cxlv} Further investigation is required in the Zemah Zedek’s writing to determine whether this reference is his, and what his intention is in making it. Possibly it illustrates that the state of *niddah* on the part of Israel is (also?) externally enforced by the ascension of Tyre (i.e. the gentile nations that subjugate Israel during exile), akin to the “shearers” of the “ewe.”

^{cxlvi} הַגֵּן = הַגֵּן.

^{cxlvii} The latter *hei* of the divine name *HaVaYaH* represents the Sefirah of *malkhut*, identified with the *Shekhinah*, which is said to wander in exile together with Israel (b???). Kabbalistically this means that it has become separated from the upper letters of the name, particularly the *vav* (her husband), and redemption thus entails the return of the *hei* to its place within the divine name.

^{cxlviii} The letter *vav*, the shape of which is a vertical line, represents the “drawing down” of divine energy from above, to the *hei*. Its phallic shape is significant in this regard, as is its representing the six “emotional”

Sephirot (*vav* equaling six in *gematria*), the last of which is *yesod*, “the culmination of the torso, sign of the holy covenant.” When the *hei* “wanders” from it, the flow of influence is interrupted, and a state of *niddah* ensues. As *malkhut* is also described with the metaphor of speech, its separation from the *vav* indicates the loss of content (which is not inherent in speech) from the letters of speech.

^{cxlviii} The feminine will find her voice. This is contrasted with the prohibition of listening to female singing, and with the bride’s silence when accepting the wedding ring.

^{cxlix} *Matir assurim* (“frees the bound”) is read *matir issurim* (“permits the prohibited”). The resolution of the cosmic state of *niddah* will obviate the need for this prohibition on the personal level as well.

^{cl} *Ze’eir anpin* (“minor visage”) refers to the six Sephirot represented by the *vav* (see endnote cxxviii). In Lurianic teaching, the ten Sephirot are subdivided into various *parzufim* (visages), called “father,” “mother,” “son,” and “daughter.” *Ze’eir anpin* correlates with “son.” See *Mystical Concepts*, 139 ff.

^{cli} Contrasted with the “intellectual” Sephirot that precede the Sephirah of *hessed*.

^{clii} The letter *resh* is thus the impoverished *dalet* (*dibbur*), lacking divine illumination, and therefore “seen on the side of evil.”

^{cliii} *Rav* does not only imply abundance, but also that the abundance is of discrete and disparate entities that have no bond with one another. It is reminiscent of the realm of *kelipah* which is referred to [Zohar ?] as *turei dipruda* (mountains of separation), implying their disunity with the divine, as well as their internal disunity.

^{cliv} Heb. *Nefashot*.

^{clv} Heb. *Nefesh*.

^{clvi} Rashi (cited in fn90) explains that this distinction was due to Esau’s family “worshipping many gods,” while Jacob’s family “worshipped the one G-d.” Thus plurality and singularity reflect on one’s association with the holy/divine realm or lack thereof.

^{clvii} Thus association is made between “minority” (*ze’eir*), the diminution (*az’irat*) of *malkhut*, and Jacob, all leading to his “greatness,” expressed in his statement, “*yesh li kol*.” Although the one who is minor is “great,” *rav*, in this context it is not interpreted in the sense of multiplicity and diversity, but in the sense divine all-inclusivity and unity. See *Derekh mitzvotekha* (shoresh mitzvot ha-tefilah?) re: infinity implying all-inclusivity.

^{clviii} As in previous note; the statement *man de-ihu ze’eir, ihu rav* is interpreted identically to the statement *be-yud nivra ha-olam ha-ba*.

^{clix} Heb. *hitravrevut*, of the same root as *rav*. It implies not only largeness, but undue inflation of self.

^{clx} Esau’s wealth and abundance would seem to belie the idea that aggrandizement leads to being diminished. Rayatz resolves this by downplaying the significance of material possessions. This theme is quite common in Habad thought, see below, fn103.

^{clxi} R. Shmuel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1834-1882), youngest son and successor to R. Menahem Mendel as fourth rebbe of Habad-Lubavitch.

^{clxii} I.e. it is not only objectionable from a pietistic-moralistic perspective, but is illogical as well.

^{clxiii} The most basic meaning of this phrase is that the people have many needs, but they are unable to articulate them. The prayer continues “Their lacks and their requests they are unable to recount.”

^{clxiv} I.e. a person has an abundance of needs, requiring even those things that are non-essential, because they lack the intelligence to realize how this pursuit impoverishes them.

^{clxv} I.e. on a Kabbalistic-Hasidic level. Heb. *be-pnimiyut*, on the inner, mystical level of interpretation.

^{clxvi} Heb. *ha’amakat ha-da’at*, plumbing the depths of knowledge. This is the opposite of *da’atam ketzarah*, their minds (knowledge) are inadequate (short, shallow). See Tanya cited in fn97 that *da’at* implies bonding with the idea one contemplates.

^{clxvii} Yiddish in the original transcript.

^{clxviii} Despite there being an abundance of divine blessing, the *qelipah* does not acknowledge the superiority of divinity, because its abundance is manifest in a most external way, not evidencing its divine source (see above).

^{clxix} Divinity or the realm of the sacred is “silent,” not making its presence felt to the Other Side, even as it infuses it with abundance. This disconnect is represented by the metaphor of the shearing of “hair” (see above).

^{clxx} The nape of the neck is another metaphor for the disconnect between the divine source of bestowal and the lack of recognition of such in the realm of *qelipah*. Thus Pharaoh can even deny divinity altogether, even as he is sustained by it. See Tanya, ch. ? (אחוריים).

^{clxxi} ‘The pauper has nothing’ is interpreted here in three ways. 1) The unholy realm has no spiritual beneficence, that being the true good; 2) *qelipah* possesses only external endowment, which is sorely deficient; 3) even what it possesses cannot last, because it is not “true”; it does not acknowledge and does not serve its enduring and eternal source in the divine.

^{clxxii} How can something at once receive sustenance and vitality from a source, while simultaneously remaining oblivious to it? Bestowal implies revelation, while ignorance implies concealment, which should not be able to coexist. See *Tanya, sha'ar ha-yihud weha-emunah*, ch. 3(?), ff.

^{clxxiii} R. Shalom Dov Baer Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1860-1920), a.k.a. Rashab, son and successor to R. Shemu'el as fifth rebbe of Ḥabad. The name suffix means “may his soul repose in Eden,” one of several phrases commonly used to refer to the deceased. In R. Shalom Dov Baer’s case, this phrase is practically part of his title, such that, especially during the lifetime of his son and successor, he was known simply as *der rebbe, nishmosoy eyden*.

^{clxxiv} Thus the key to the paradox mentioned above is the notion of the state of exile. One in exile is present, but is not free to assert their own identity. Rather they are compelled to behave according to the dictates of their oppressor.

^{clxxv} That which is a vessel and has the requisite self-abnegation is able to be unified with the divine light bestowed upon it. There is no tension between them.

^{clxxvi} The verse in Deuteronomy implies that G-d apportioned (*halaq* = assigned a portion (*heleq*)) the stars etc. to be the gods of the other nations aside for Israel. The following interpretations presumably are motivated by the problem of ascribing any authenticity to other deities from the perspective of Jewish monotheism. According to Rashi’s commentary, this was an act of deception (*halaq* = smooth-talked (*halaq*)) to render the nations sinful, since those deities are false and should not be worshipped. The AR suggests that G-d separated (*halaq* = divided (*hileq*)) the nations from divinity, rendering them without *biṭul*, so that they fell into idolatry (see *Tanya*, ch. 20 ff.). Thus the nations are incapable of seamlessly unifying with divinity.

^{clxxvii} *Gilgul* is the Kabbalistic concept of reincarnation. One type of reincarnation (see Shaloh? Chabad.org) is a form of punishment for a sinful soul. The soul is reincarnated in something non-human, e.g. an animal, while remaining a human soul with human consciousness.

^{clxxviii} Matter and form here used in the (Greek?) philosophic sense. The matter of the body is an apt and hospitable housing for the form of the soul.

^{clxxix} The human soul in the animal is unable to express its humanness (e.g. through speech).

^{clxxx} An analogy for the analogy. Divine light in exile is akin to a human soul reincarnated in an animal, which is in turn akin to a person in a sack.

^{clxxxi} Because the *qelipah* is not “affected” by the divine light within it, the light merely being present but not dominant, it is capable of denying the source of its power and aggrandizing itself on account of the power’s presence within it.

^{clxxxii} A summary: the lack of the *yod* on the part of the *rash/resh*, identical with the lack of *kol*, represents the lack of the self-constriction of both recipient and benefactor. Since *kol*, identical with *yesod*, represents the benefactor, the *rash*’s lack of *kol* is not merely a deficiency of readiness to receive, but consequently also a lack of beneficence being transmitted from the giver. This is the essential insight of Chapter VII: the state of the recipient influences the mode of the giver as well.

^{clxxxiii} I.e. to introduce the corrective of *biṭul* to the world.

^{clxxxiv} I.e. Israel is “the righteous etc.” and thus the ones bestowing upon the world in the capacity of *yesod*.

^{clxxxv} See above, sec. II, the teaching of the Maggid.

^{clxxxvi} First light is “rolled away” before darkness, meaning that the original light is occluded by the *tsimtsum*. However, the purpose is ultimately that the darkness of *tsimtsum* facilitate the emergence of light in the space *tsimtsum* created. The *tsimtsum* is therefore initially enacted in a manner that will allow for the light to eventually emerge, as in the parable of the Maggid.

^{clxxxvii} I.e. this is the overall goal of Israel’s divine service. It is the elevation, purification, rectification, etc. of the lowly and crass (or even evil) to holiness and divinity, represented by the transposition of the letters of *sheqer* (falsehood) to *qeresh* (panel of the Tabernacle). This is also referred to here and elsewhere as the “transformation of the insanity of the opposite (*sheṭut de-le'umat zeh*) to holy insanity (*sheṭut de-qedushah*).

^{clxxxviii} In this way all three interpretations of the *yod* (given by Rayyats) are represented in a single process.

^{clxxxix} *Iqveta de-meshiḥa*; see bSotah, (49a?).

^{cx} The verse concludes “*Ya-H* answered me with expanse.” The contingency of the expansive response on the initial call from the straits correlates with the power of the diminution of the *yod* elaborated on in the discourse.

^{cxci} A well-known dynamic in Ḥabad thought is that of *gillu'i ha-he'elem* (revelation of that which is concealed), especially as it contrasts with *yesh me-'ayin* (something *ex nihilo*). The former represents the emergence of an entity from a state of obscurity into a state of manifestation, so that it exhibits a primordially or uncreatedness. It is thus superior to that which emerged *ex nihilo*, which is created, or “innovated.” Here this distinction implies that the “glory of *HaWaYaH*” is already always present, and need only become manifest.

^{excii} Ar. *ba- 'agala didan*.

^{exciii} It is typical (perhaps signature) for the Rebbe (though not other rebbes) to conclude his talks, including his discourses, with a prayer/wish/blessing for the arrival of the messiah. In our case it flows organically from the discourses topic.

^{exciv} For many of the concepts here, see notes on *Bati le-ganni* – 5710, ch. 7, and *B.l.* – 5717.

^{excv} *Yortsayt* is Yiddish, meaning “year time,” i.e. the day marking the anniversary of a person’s passing.

With regard to the Habad masters, the word is synonymous with *hillula* (see note on 5717).

^{excvi} The inserts that represent the clauses of the discourse that were delivered only on the Sabbath should be paid attention to for any difference in tone or theme from the “weekday” discourse. A Sabbath gathering (Yid. *farbrengen*) was typically for more of an “in-crowd,” as it could not be electronically broadcast or recorded. We may also assume that it was thought to be delivered in an atmosphere of greater sanctity than the weekday *farbrengen*.

^{excvii} *Midrash* refers to rabbinic material that (often) engages in the midrashic form of biblical exegesis (see ? for specifics). It also refers to collections of such material outside of the Talmud, such as in *Midrash Rabbah*, *Tanhuma*, et al. This material is often distinguished from rabbinic legal material (*halakhah*), although some midrashic exegesis is legally oriented.

^{excviii} *Aggada* refers to rabbinic material that is of a narrative quality, but in fact largely overlaps and is synonymous with *midrash*. It is sometimes used especially to mean the non-legal passages incorporated within the Talmud; see following note.

^{excix} In Hebrew, *sodot*. Specifically this word connotes the mystical or kabbalistic genre of Jewish thought, which is understood to be alluded to within the biblical and rabbinic writings.

^{cc} A collection of aggadic material found in the Talmud, by R. Jacob ibn Ḥabib (16th century). It was customary for Jews to study from this compilation in the evenings, between the afternoon and evening prayers (*minḥah* and *arvit*).

^{cci} Thus a passage of Midrash is an apt anchor for expatiating on a mystical theme.

^{ccii} This bracketed phrase is in the original transcript. The Rebbe glosses the word *'iqari*, which translates as “my primary.” The referent of the possessive “my” is ambiguous; it could be made to refer to the speaker’s self (“my primary being”), or to their place (“the place that was my primary [place] originally”). From the context it is evident that “primary” describes the place, not the self. Thus the subsequent phrase *'iqar shekhinah* (“primary *shekhinah*”) should be translated as “the primary [place of the] *shekhinah*,” which is what the Rebbe clarifies here. Nevertheless, elsewhere (see *B.l.* – 5711) the other interpretation is activated, so that it refers to a level within the *shekhinah* itself.

^{cciii} This verse and its interpretation are cited in the Midrash itself. In its context, the *tsaddiqim* (righteous) may refer to the seven above-mentioned saints. The Rebbe, however, interprets it as referring to the righteous in general, and by extension all of Israel (see *B.l.* - ?). Thus the seven *tsaddiqim*, and especially Moses, serve as a model for Jewish divine service in general.

^{cciv} The Rebbe makes explicit how the Midrash manipulates the verse in order to derive its interpretation. The words of the verse are *we-yishkenu la'ad aleyha* ([The righteous shall inherit the land] and they will dwell eternally upon it (the above mentioned land)). The Midrash reads this with slightly modified vocalization, as *we-yashkinu le'ad aleyha* (and they will cause the Eternal to dwell upon [the land]). The word *la'ad* (forever) changes from a modifier of *we-yishkenu* (they will dwell) to its subject. Via reference to the phrase *shokhen ad* (he (G-d) who dwells eternally), the identity of that subject is revealed. Thus the second half of the verse no longer elaborates on the first half, but rather gives its rationale. Why will “the righteous inherit the land?” Because “they cause the Eternal to dwell upon it.”

^{ccv} The Midrash associates the “coming into the garden” and Moses’ bringing the *shekhinah* down to earth with the erecting of the Tabernacle. See Tanya ch. ? that the construction of the Tabernacle was to make permanent the transient epiphany at Mt. Sinai. See also *Bati le-ganni* – I, 302 ff.

^{ccvi} The Rebbe often refers to the statement of R. Schneur Zalman in Tanya (ch. ?) that *ha-torah hi nitshit* (the Torah is eternal). Torah is from the root of *hora'ah* (instruction). Thus “eternal Torah” = eternal instruction. In this case, the instruction is derived from an entity that is itself said to be eternal.

^{ccvii} I.e., since every Jew is exhorted to “remember the Torah (instruction) of Moses my servant,” the lessons of the Torah apply to each Jew at all times.

^{ccviii} This is a reference to the Talmud’s story about a sage who would dance at weddings, and when at his funeral a pillar of fire intervened between his bier and the people, his colleague remarked that “the old man’s nonsense served him well.” This is the source for the concept of “holy insanity.”

^{ccix} The Tabernacle, the divine domicile, is constructed out of *shittim*, insanity, that has been transformed into its counterpart in the holy realm.

^{ccx} *Qeresh* = שקר; *sheqer* = שקר.

^{ccxi} Yiddish in the original transcript. “We erect.”

^{ccxii} The Rebbe alludes to an oft-invoked principle that “the name by which an item is called in the Holy Tongue (Hebrew) is the conduit for its vital energy.” Therefore, by analyzing the name, one can deduce the essence of the item. Here, since the Tabernacle panel is called *qeresh*, an anagram for *sheqer*, this indicates that its essence is the transformation of “falsehood” into a dwelling for the divine. See below.

^{ccxiii} The discussion in this discourse will illustrate this idea to some extent.

^{ccxiv} The concept of the name comprising the vital force of a given item contains two ideas. First, that each letter of the Hebrew alphabet (with its shape, meaning, etc.) is representative of a particular kind of energy. The combination of the name’s individual letters represents the sum total of the various kinds of energies that make up the named item. A second concept is that in the merging of disparate letters to form a word, a new kind of “light” is introduced beyond the sum of the word’s parts. (This is analogous to the notion that there is a meaning in a word that cannot be derived simply from listing its letters. Their combination produces a previously absent meaning.) This is referred to as “the light that surmounts them all” (*or ha-’oleh al kulanah*).

Here, the Rebbe clarifies (in interpreting the words of Rayyats) that the relation of *qeresh* to the concept of transforming the nonsense of profanity into holy insanity is not only at the level of the *or ha-’oleh al kulanah*, but also at the level of the individual letters that compose the word.

^{ccxv} Heb. *al kulanah*, lit. upon all of them. I.e. the possibility for the surmounting light to be manifest is only once the individual letters are present. While not reducible to the individual letters, this light is not independent of them.

^{ccxvi} This idea is developed through the discussion of the Zoharic story about the letters *shin*, *resh*, and *qoph*, and the exposition on the contrasting of the *resh* and *dalet*, and the *qoph* and *he*.

^{ccxvii} “Falsehood has no feet” means that falsehood cannot be maintained for any length of time. Only by including some element of truth, represented by the letter *shin*, is falsehood believable. This is alluded to in the shape of the letters, as the letters ק and ר have only a single leg, while the ש has a wide base.

^{ccxviii} Heb. *zeh le-’umat zeh ’assah ha-’elo-him*. This verse is a source of the concept taught in the Kabbalah, that for each aspect of the holy realm, there is a counterpart in the realm of impurity. This is a common theme in Ḥabad thought. Often the unholy realm is referred to simply as “*le-’umat zeh*,” “the opposite.” Here I have translated this phrase as “the opposite side.”

^{ccxix} Etymology is used here loosely. This is a common midrashic strategy of word association, not strictly dependent on an actual link between the words. Since the Hebrew has מלשון, I have translated it as “etymologically.”

^{ccxx} By tradition, certain letters are written in the Torah scroll larger than most, and some are written smaller. In both Deut. 6:4 (הוֹיָה אֶחָד) and in Ex. 34:14 (לֹאֵל אֶחָד), the final letter is enlarged. This seems to underscore the importance of distinguishing between them. In the former verse, if *’ehad* is written with a *resh* it would imply the opposite of its meaning, to say that there is another god. Likewise if in the latter verse *’aher* were written with a *dalet*, it would negate monotheism. Thus the minor difference between the two letters have the power to undermine the fundamental principle of Jewish monotheism.

^{ccxxi} Hence, while both indicate poverty, they must refer to two diametrically opposed concepts of lack.

^{ccxxii} It is interesting and worthy of consideration that the Rebbe applies this dictum to the seventh *chapter*, especially in light of its usual application to Moses, and to the Rebbe’s generation (seventh in the Ḥabad line).

^{ccxxiii} See note on 5717, ch. 1.

^{ccxxiv} The cited verses refer to poverty and lowliness in a positive sense. The prayer to be “like dust to all” prefaces the request “open my heart to your Torah, and let my soul pursue your commandments.” The verse in Psalms reads in its entirety “Incline, O G-d, your ear, answer me, for I am etc.” Thus this is an emptiness that enables spiritual achievement.

^{ccxxv} This is also evident from the fact that “she” is the one doing the “diminishing,” such that “she” does not entirely relinquish her sense of selfhood and agency.

^{ccxxvi} Below the discourse will go on to qualify the extent of this abnegation. It is noteworthy that this level of *bitul* is not discussed in 5717, while here it is the pivotal idea of the discourse.

^{ccxxvii} See 5717, note on ch. V, re: the Sephirot.

^{ccxxviii} The title verse of this discourse alludes to two levels of *yod* in the words “two prongs” (*shzey yaddot*), which may also be read as “two *yods*.” This is one of the discourses that serve as a basis for *Bosi le-ganni*; see editor’s footnote at beginning of 5710.

^{ccxxxix} See note on 5717, ch. II. The world-to-come is conceived of in Ḥabad thought as a world of comprehension (*binah*) of divinity. Its source is thus *ḥokhmah*, represented by the *yod*.

^{ccxxx} See note ? above regarding the various sizes of the letters. The *yod* of the word פִּינָחַם at Num. 25:11, e.g., is diminutive.

^{ccxxxix} See 5717, ch. II, note on Ba'al Shem Tov; *ibid*, ch. V, note on Alter Rebbe.

^{ccxxxix} Heb. מי כה' א-להינו המגביהי לשבת המשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ. “Who is like *HaWaYaH*, our G-d, who dwells aloft, who lowers to look into heavens and earth?” In the Hebrew, the words *ha-magbihi* (who dwells aloft) and *ha-mashpilli* (who lowers) each contain an ungrammatical *yod* at the end.

^{ccxxxix} See note on 5717, ch. V, re: worlds.

^{ccxxxix} On the transformation of the *dalet* to a *hey*, see *Bati le-ganni*, ch. 8, and discourses of 5718 and 5738. The letter *hey* (ה) is composed of a *dalet* and a leg, written as an inverted *yod* in traditional orthography of the Torah. The *yod* is that which raises the *dalet* from its poverty, and represents the bestowal of the benefactor to the *dalet* and the union of the *dalet*-recipient with the benefactor in a direct and personal manner. R. Schneur Zalman reads המגביהי – *ha-magbihi* as המגביה – *ha-magbi'ah yod*, “who raises aloft the *hey* via the *yod*.” Note that the verses that follow contain a similar theme: “He lifts the pauper (*dal*) up from the dust... to seat with princes... He seats the barren woman of the house as a happy mother...”

^{ccxxxix} See 5717, note on ch. I, re: *ha'ala'ah* and *hamshakhah*.

^{ccxxxix} It is unclear to me what point was made by citing R. Schneur Zalman, as the Rebbe goes on to point out that this teaching relates to the later consummation of the process of bestowal as represented by the letter *hey*, elucidated in Ch. 8 of the discourse.

^{ccxxxix} Heb. *aḥorayyim*. This notion is contrasted with *panim*, meaning “face” and connoting internalizable and direct interaction. The notion of *aḥorayyim* has several connotations (see e.g. Tanya, ch. 22 ff.; *ibid*, *Iggeret ha-qodesh*, 19). The most relevant here is that of an indirect or more general bestowal that prefaces and prepares the recipient for a more direct, personalized bestowal (see *Torat menḥem - derushey ḥatunah*, 16 ff; *ibid*, 102 ff).

^{ccxxxix} The letter *hey* represents the recipient (*dalet*) as they have become completed through accepting the bestowal (represented by the *yod*-cum-left line of the *hey*) from the benefactor, through a direct interaction or union of the two.

^{ccxxxix} *Torah ohr* is a collection of discourses of R. Schneur Zalman arranged according to the weekly pericope read in the synagogue, on the books of Genesis and Exodus (the other three books of the Pentateuch are treated in a separate collection, called *Liqqutey torah*). These are transcripts of R. Schneur Zalman's discourses, interspersed with glosses by his grandson, R. Menaḥem Mendel (see note to 5717, ch. VI). Thus this teaching is attributed to both of them.

^{ccxli} In Ḥabad teaching, *barukh* (blessed) is associated with *hamshakhah*, through the etymology of *ha-mavrikh* (pulling down). This in turn is associated with divine revelation.

^{ccxli} Heb. יהי, spelled *yod, hey, yod*. Each letter is taken to represent another Sefirah: *yod* = *ḥokhmah*; *hey* = *binah*; *yod* = *yesod*.

^{ccxlii} See note on 5717, ch. VI., re: *ze'eyr anpin*. Since each Sefirah is said to comprise all ten, each Sefirah has its individual *yesod* as well. Thus it is emphasized that here we speak of the actual Sefirah of *yesod*, as it is part of *ze'eyr anpin*.

^{ccxlii} See note above, re: *partsuphim*. The *partsuph* consisting of the Sefirah of *ḥokhmah* is called *abba* (father). While both *ḥokhmah* and *binah* convey bounty to *yesod* (for the purpose of conveying it further to *malkhut*), the primary origin of the bounty is from *yesod* of *abba*. This notion serves as the rationale for the particular identification of *ḥokhmah* and *yesod*, as indicated by their common representation by the letter *yod*.

^{ccxliii} The “writings of the Arizal.” These writings are by R. Hayyim Vital, and their contents are attributed to his master, R. Isaac Luria (c. 1534-1572).

^{ccxliii} Joseph embodies the Sefirah of *yesod*. He is orphaned of his mother, *binah*, because her bestowal does not extend down to *yesod*, but only to the preceding Sefirah of *hod*.

^{ccxliii} Seeing is associated with *ḥokhmah*, while hearing is associated with understanding (*binah*). Thus sight is a more profound faculty, and also extends to the physical realm, whereas hearing is less profound, and also can only perceive the spiritual. This accords with the principle “the loftier something is, the lower it descends.”

^{ccxliii} “Daughter” referring to *malkhut*. Thus *abba* extends not only until *yesod*, but goes on to lay the foundation of *malkhut*. This too is explained by its superior level.

^{ccxliii} Letters are parts of speech, which is associated with *malkhut*, the “world of speech.” While speech is actualized at the level of *malkhut*, the possibility for speech, the root of the letters, is in *ḥokhmah*. Thus *ḥokhmah* is being expressed at the level of *malkhut*.

^{ccxliii} As indicated by the *yod* that forms the rear of the *dalet*.

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- ^{ccl} I.e. *hokhmah*, as above. This is the first kind of *yod*.
- ^{ccli} Thus, *yehi* = *hokhmah* and *binah* as they extend down to *yesod*; *shem HaWaYaH* = *malkhut*; *mevorakh* = the downward extension that bridges the upper Sephirot culminating in *yesod* with *malkhut*.
- ^{cclii} The idea that *yesod* is essentially channeling the radiation of *hokhmah* suggests that even when we speak of the function of *yesod* (“uniting heaven and earth”), it is appropriate to associate this with the *hokhmah* (by which the “world-to-come was created”).
- ^{ccliii} In other words: both *dalet* and *resh* connote poverty, with the *dalet* being valorized and the *resh* delegitimized. The difference between them appears to be that which the *dalet* **possesses** in contrast to the *resh*, and not (only) in **how** it lacks. How is this to be reconciled with the positive connotation of lack? This is what the discourse now sets out to answer.
- ^{ccliv} From this point forward, the Rebbe argues his central thesis in this discourse, that *biṭṭul* is a means to a greater end.
- ^{cclv} See, e.g., Tanya (ch. ??), that all life comes from the holy realm, including the life within *qelipah* etc.
- ^{cclvi} Sic.
- ^{cclvii} *Kol*.
- ^{cclviii} The realm of *qelipah* is considered void of value on the one hand, yet utterly arrogant on the other. See the discussion of Pharaoh’s attitude in Ch. 7 and in 5717. Thus it is great where it ought to be humble, and humble where it ought to be great (see below re: the “trampled threshold”).
- ^{cclix} Heb. *isquphah ha-nidresset*. Something akin to what we would term a “pushover.”
- ^{cclx} Heb. *hagbahah*; i.e. with pride and self-confidence.
- ^{cclxi} See above, ch. II.
- ^{cclxii} In other words: the distinction made between the *resh* and the *dalet*, that the *resh* has no *yod* while the *dalet* does, is central to the idea that, though the names of both letters are related to poverty, there is a fundamental and even polar opposition between the two kinds of want. The *yod* of *yesod* and all it consists of that is incorporated into the *dalet* indicates that the *dalet* actually has tremendous potential, and its state of poverty is merely a prerequisite for it to actualize a further, significant and potent purpose. The poverty of the *resh* on the other hand contains nothing more than lack for lack’s sake, and is of no value.
- ^{cclxiii} A *hemshekh* is a series of discourses that treat one topic thoroughly, usually delivered consecutively. In the case of *Bati le-ganni*, it consists of four discourses that were scheduled to be disseminated consecutively for four special occasions over less than two months.
- ^{cclxiv} It is noteworthy that the Rebbe summarizes the gist of the entire *hemshekh* here, an unusual and illuminating moment.
- ^{cclxv} See 5717, ch. IV.
- ^{cclxvi} This discussion, in fact, occupies the entire second half of the discourse, until the end.
- ^{cclxvii} I.e. through *tsimtsum*. R. Schneur Zalman offers a novel perspective on *tsimtsum*, that it is an act of divine love so that G-d and humanity may meet, and that it should call forth a similar renouncement of self on the part of the person.
- ^{cclxviii} Screen (*prasa*), curtain (*masakh*), etc. are notions derived from the Kabbalistic literature to describe the progressive dimming of the divine light.
- ^{cclxix} Heb. *pashut*. The term is contrasted with *murkav*, meaning “composite,” or something composed of multiple parts. For this reason I chose to translate it as “homogeneous.”
- ^{cclxx} Since the initial state of the divine light filling all existence negated the possibility of any other existence (“worlds”), the only way to allow for other existence was the absolute removal of the light. At subsequent stages, worldly existence is already a reality, and the question is only one of degree; thus the later *tsimtsumim* are merely a dimming, rather than an eclipsing, of the divine light.
- ^{cclxxi} The Rebbe emphasizes here that, while he is going to argue that the ideal is not loss of self, but rather astonishing growth, this should not be understood as minimizing the extent of the initial state of *biṭṭul*. This *biṭṭul* must be absolute; yet, through this, the later achievements will be made possible to the fullest degree.
- ^{cclxxii} If the phenomenon of *tsimtsum* is to evoke a corresponding reciprocation within the individual, then the notion that the end of this self-abnegation is to achieve a greater cosmic ideal must also have its corresponding element within the process of *tsimtsum*.
- ^{cclxxiii} Translated above as “evolutionary system of the worlds.”
- ^{cclxxiv} Commonly expressed in Habad parlance as *ha-tsimtsum hu bishvil ha-giluy*, “constriction is for the purpose of disclosure.”
- ^{cclxxv} This passage was already cited above. Apparently it was quoted in the discourse of the Sabbath day, as well as during the Saturday night discourse, and therefore shows up twice, although in the text it appears redundant.

Note that in this quotation the Rebbe adds the phrase referring to the *qaw*, which bears out the idea that the purpose of the *tsimsum* was for a subsequent disclosure.

^{cclxxvi} This being a line of light, which is the initial infusion of divine energy into the empty space created by the *tsimsum*.

^{cclxxvii} Regarding the Ba'al Shem Tov and this teaching of his, see notes to 5717, ch. II.

^{cclxxviii} In 5717 this teaching was adduced in order to illustrate the notion that the benefactor must enact a *tsimsum* within himself in order to be capable of bestowing (in addition to the necessary self-abnegation of the recipient). Here, the teaching serves as support for the idea that the recipient's *bitul* also enables the growth that follows (i.e. not merely the capacity to receive, but the ability to develop what is received further).

^{cclxxix} See *ibid*.

^{cclxxx} With regard to all other creations in Genesis, 1, Scripture says that G-d uttered 'Let there be etc.,' 'and it was so (*va-yehi ken*).'¹ Thus there is an anomaly here in saying 'and there was light (*va-yehi or*)' which serves as the basis for the Maggid's interpretation.

^{cclxxxi} Yiddish in the original transcript. "It doesn't come to."

^{cclxxxii} Yiddish in the original transcript. "As the light stands in [the] *tsimsum*."

^{cclxxxiii} The *qaw* thus does not exhaust the original intent for divine light to be apparent within the worlds; it is merely the light that is initially possible.

^{cclxxxiv} Yiddish in the original transcript; "another (different) light."

^{cclxxxv} The Maggid's teaching itself (as quoted here) does not convey the notion that *tsimsum* enable disclosure; rather it highlights the misfortune of *tsimsum* (in 5717 the idea that through *tsimsum* sustainable light is possible is stated more explicitly). The Rebbe is adding the caveat at the end to return us to his own point. If so, it is not clear how the Maggid's teaching supports the Rebbe's thesis. It is possible that the Rebbe is relying on the entirety of the Maggid's teachings on this topic (quoted at greater length in 5717), and here he has abbreviated them.

^{cclxxxvi} In Tanya the meditation relates to the phenomenon of *tsimsum* in whatever capacity; the divine readiness to make space for the human should elicit a corresponding selfless love on the part of the person. This would imply (based on the logic in this discourse) that every *tsimsum* is for the purpose of disclosure. However, the Rebbe adds a pivotal element here, which greatly deepens the significance of the *tsimsum* and its underlying motivations: Only through utter removal could independent existence be possible. Thus, when we speak of an intended divine disclosure, it should be understood as being a disclosure to and assimilated by independent existence. Without an independent recipient, the revelation's significance is greatly enfeebled.

This insight may be read back into Tanya as well, since the intent of the *tsimsumim* is described there as being "for love of the human." If G-d enacted *tsimsum* in order to commune with the human, then the primary act of *tsimsum* was that which effected utter removal of the light.

^{cclxxxvii} Heb. אור אין סוף ברוך הוא (*or eyn soph barukh hu*). This may be interpreted as "the infinite light," or "the light of the infinite." For various reasons I find the second phrase to be more helpful, including the fact that the term *barukh hu* is appended to this term here, which much more plausibly refers to the deity rather than to the light.

^{cclxxxviii} So that the light that passes through the "screen" is weaker (but not entirely lost) than before its traversal.

^{cclxxxix} Heb. *nifla*. The term is used in Habad terminology to mean "something to wonder at," "distant," "hidden." See Yosef Marcus, trans., *Nurturing Faith* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2005), 40, fn51, for an interpretation of the use of this term.

^{ccxc} *Hemshekh be-sha'ah she-hikdimu* – 5672 (the series of discourses beginning with the discourse titled "when they prefaced" of the year 1912), often called *hemshekh te'erav* (תער"ב) (transposing the Hebrew letters indicating the year, תרע"ב, which spells the Hebrew word "you will starve," so that it spells "it will be sweet"), or simply (*hemshekh*) *ayin-beys*, the Hebrew letters for '72. This series, which was recited in weekly installments extending over a period of about three-and-a-half years (in addition to a significant portion that was never delivered publicly, but was only written), is considered the Rashab's magnum opus, his most advanced, profound, and fully developed ideas, and a watershed in Habad Hasidic teaching.

^{ccxci} Rashab; see 5717, ch. VIII.

^{ccxcii} The convoluted syntax of this sentence is present in the original Hebrew of the transcript. It would seem to be saying that the advantage of the initial total *tsimsum* (over the other, lesser *tsimsumim*) is in the fact that it not only allows for the emanation of the lights, but that it enables the emergence of the vessels. The former effect would not justify the totality of this *tsimsum*; only the latter result fully explains it.

On lights and vessels, see note to 5717, ch. IV.

^{ccxciii} The Ari describes the process of *tsimsum* as an initial removal of all divine light from the "empty space," and then reradiating a thin ray into the emptiness from which worlds are created. He suggests that by the

same token, the light could have been removed almost entirely, leaving only the ray of the *qaw*, with the same result. However, he argues that this would not have allowed the vessels to properly form.

^{ccxciv} See note on 5717, ch. IV. Here *reshimu* is interpreted as the light of or potential for limitation, which will be developed below.

^{ccxcv} Not only did the totalizing *tsimtsum* allow the vessels to emerge *in addition to* the radiation of the *qaw*, but it fundamentally changed the nature of the light of the *qaw* itself.

^{ccxcvi} This is a term used to refer to the divine potential for creating limitation, that is ultimately expressed and actualized in the creation of the physical, within the divine essence. This will be expanded on below based on the teaching of *Avodat ha-qodesh*.

^{ccxcvii} Had the *tsimtsum* not effected complete removal, and merely diminished the light down to the glimmer of the *qaw*, the *qaw* would have fundamentally remained an aspect of the pre-*tsimtsum* light (the light of limitation), which would have perpetuated the state in which worlds/vessels could not emerge. Absolute *tsimtsum* brought about that the subsequent radiation of the *qaw* is of a different order of magnitude from the pre-*tsimtsum* light, such that it does not negate the vessels that were able to emerge.

^{ccxcviii} The first *inyan nifla* that occurs is the facilitation of the emergence of vessels, which can then absorb the light, something which was not possible before the *tsimtsum*. Vessels could not exist, and it was inconceivable that they could coexist with divine light of any kind. Now the Rebbe introduces a second (and greater) *inyan nifla*, which is the ability for the (limited) vessels to absorb the limitless light as well.

^{ccxcix} I.e. the light that is capable of traversing the *tsimtsum*, whether or not it has already done so. The *tsimtsum* distinguishes a level of light that can be made transmittable to “worlds,” and it then processes this light so that it is actually absorbed by its intended recipients.

^{ccc} Heb. *be-’erekh*. This term is used in Ḥabad teaching to indicate two things that are in some way comparable to one another, of a kind, on the same continuum, even if the distance between them is vast. This is opposed to two things that have no common ground, but are of completely different kinds. See Tanya ch. 48.

^{ccci} I.e. even that light which was deemed too intense to be transmitted to the worlds via the *tsimtsum*. The fact that even an element of this light could undergo processing through the *tsimtsum* indicates that the light as a whole is *be-’erekh*, within the realm of conceivability, vis-à-vis the divine light that radiates within the created realms.

^{cccii} Below it is explained that the light of limitation is itself unlimited, whereas through the *tsimtsum* actual limitation is enacted.

^{ccciii} The first *inyan nifla* above.

^{ccciv} The second *inyan nifla* above. Below it will be described how this transmittal of the limitless light is made possible.

^{cccv} Heb. *ḥiddush*.

^{cccvii} The *tsimtsum* has a dual effect on the pre-*tsimtsum* light: it removes and conceals the “limitless light,” preventing it from undoing the creation of the “empty space”; and it distinguishes, filters, and dims the “light of limitation” so that it will be assimilable by the created entities. Regarding the latter light it is said that it is *nit-tsamtsem*, “has become constricted,” while of the former it is said that *naga’ bo ha-tsimtsum*, it was “touched by the *tsimtsum*.” It was not constricted, but it did not remain unaffected, since it was relegated to “outside the empty space.”

^{cccviii} Now the Rebbe is adding that the limitless light is affected more profoundly than merely being evicted from the “empty space”; it is actually circumscribed (*ba bi-veḥinat gevul*) as a result of the *tsimtsum*.

^{cccviii} The potential for limitation is differentiated from the aggregate infinity of the divine power on account of the *tsimtsum*. This does not only allow for limitation to be actualized, but it transforms the nature of infinity.

^{cccix} The reason why “there was no space in which to establish worlds” (worlds implying some kind of limitation or definition) prior to the *tsimtsum*, despite the divine not lacking the ability to create, was because this potential for limitation was perceived merely as a facet of the divine infinity, accentuating the reaches of the divine power, rather than a potential toward an actual other. By distinguishing this ability for limitation as an individual power via the *tsimtsum*, it now took on a new significance, that of a source for actual creation.

^{cccix} A Kabbalistic work by R. Meir ibn Gabbai (1480-after 1540).

^{cccxi} This view of *Avodat ha-qodesh* is disputed by other Jewish philosophers, e.g. (Maimonides?), who deem limitation to be a flaw, and lack thereof not a detraction from perfection. Ibn Gabbai’s view is widely cited and accepted in Ḥabad sources; see, e.g., 5643.

^{cccxi} Since the divine perfection is without limit, any facet of that perfection, even a potential for limitation, is unbounded. This is because this potential exists at this point as an expression of the divine, not as real creation of an other.

^{cccxiii} This is elaborated on in the discourses of the Holy Land referenced here.

^{cccxiv} In the summer of 1929, several months after the Rebbe's wedding, Rayyats traveled to Palestine for several weeks, and then on to the U.S., where he remained for the better part of a year. (See *Toldot Habad be-artsot ha-brit?*). This was the only occasion on which a Habad rebbe visited the Holy Land.

^{cccxv} As a result of this circumscription, the vessels are capable of integrating this limitless light as well the light of limitation.

^{cccxvi} At the beginning of ch. IV, the Rebbe associated the *yod* at the rear of the *dalet* with the notion of *tsimsum bi-shvil ha-giluy*. It is the facet that distinguishes the productive *bitul* of the *dalet* from the meaningless poverty of the *resh*. Here the Rebbe brings the discussion back around to this argument, and underscores how the presence of the *yod*, the limitless light, in the *dalet*, the vacuum, is merely a potential for productivity, but as yet it is not apparent in actuality. The realization of this potential only occurs when the *dalet* is developed into a *hey*, which will be fully discussed in the following chapter of *Bati le-ganni* and in the Rebbe's discourses on it of the years 5718 and 5738.

^{cccxvii} The oft-cited Midrash adduced in Habad thought to articulate the divine intent in creation says "the Holy One desired to have a dwelling in the nether realms" (see above). Here the identity of the "nether realms" is specified as the corporeal people of Israel.

^{cccxviii} See 5717 ch. II.

^{cccix} Heb. *tsiyur adam*. The configuration of Man is understood as the system of the Ten Sephirot, which have their analogy within the human psyche (see Tanya ch. 3 et passim). This correlates with the system of *hishtalshelut* as well. Thus Israel would seem to be a result of *tsimsum*, rather than a motive for it. The association of Israel and Man is based on the Talmudic statement [bBava metsi'a, 114b] "you are called *adam*."

^{cccxx} Referring to a time prior to creation.

^{cccxxi} Heb. *mahashavah ha-qedumah de-adam qadmon*. *Adam qadmon* refers in Kabbalistic thought to initial iteration of the Sephirotic system (see *Mystical Concepts, ??*). The primordial thought of *adam qadmon* is the very first post-*tsimsum* motion toward creation, where all of creation is "taken in with one glance." This is the first level at which thought can be spoken of.

^{cccxxii} *Hemshekh yom tov shel rosh ha-shanah – 5666* (the series beginning with the discourse titled "When the holiday of Rosh Hashanah" of the year 1905), also known simply as (*hemshekh*) *samekh-vov*. This series was delivered in weekly installments extending over a period of about two-and-a-half years. Second only to *hemshekh ayin-beys*, this *hemshekh* is considered one of the most profound, fundamental and comprehensive of Rashab's oeuvre.

^{cccxxiii} The level of "desire" is the most primordial germination of the process of creation. A Habad saying has it that "*oyf a tayve iz keyn kashe*," there is no accounting for a craving. Thus the motivation of "the Holy One desired" is posited as the most profound and most authentic rationale for creation, more so than any of the logical rationales offered by Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah. Positing the presence of Israel at this level places them at the innermost and most subtle level within divinity.

^{cccxxiv} G-d is said to have consulted with the "souls of the righteous" regarding the propriety of creation, thus placing these souls at a level prior to the entire creation process. By linking this statement with the verse from Isaiah, these souls are identified with the "souls of Israel" as a whole.

^{cccxxv} It is noteworthy that this passage is from the Sabbath day discourse, but not reflected in the Saturday night discourse. It is possible that the subject matter regarding the elevated status of the souls of Israel was something the Rebbe preferred to articulate in the more intimate and familiar setting of the Sabbath *farbrengen*, which was attended by a more "in-house" audience and was not recorded or broadcast, rather than at the more public and publicized *farbrengen* on Saturday night. It was often the case that the Rebbe would express himself about matters and in ways that he would not during "weekday" *farbrengens*. While much of this material was not suppressed per se, the Rebbe may not have felt that it was appropriate fare for a more public setting.

It is also noteworthy that from this point forward there is much less material from the Sabbath day discourse inserted. This suggests to me that what follows was more fully discussed in the Saturday night discourse, and perhaps only briefly treated on Sabbath day.

^{cccxxvi} A basic principle in Habad thought and one strongly emphasized by the Rebbe is that every concept discussed in Habad thought must impact one's *avodah* (divine service). The purpose of revealing these teachings is ultimately to effect behavior and practice.

^{cccxxvii} These two modes of divine service will be elaborated below.

^{cccxxviii} The interplay between *panim* and *ahor* serves as the schema for the rest of the discourse. This includes the notions that a) every facet of reality contains a *panim* aspect and an *ahor* aspect that are

incommensurate to one another, and b) that the *panim* irradiates the *aḥor*. This dynamic is predicated on the principle of *tsimsum bi-shvil ha-giluy* elaborated above.

^{cccxxix} The four worlds of the Lurianic schema are divided into the groupings of a) '*Atsilut*, and b) *Beri'ah*, *Yetsirah*, and '*Asiyah* (*BeY'A*). The name *Beri'ah*, meaning creation, indicates that the emergence of an other outside of G-d, as it were, begins there, and not in the higher world of '*Atsilut*. Thus '*Atsilut* represents a world of divinity (*elo-hut*), while the lower three worlds are successively lower states of independent existence. In terms of *panim*, associated with revealed vitality, and *aḥor*, associated with obscured vitality, '*Atsilut* is *panim*, a realm of divine revelation, while *BeY'A* is *aḥor*, a realm of divine concealment.

^{cccxxx} Yiddish in the original transcript; "stand."

^{cccxxxi} Heb. *mi-tsad elo-hut*. Lit. "from the side of divinity." The world of '*Atsilut* does not only represent one world from among many, but is a paradigmatic shift from the perspective in the lower three worlds. It is the perspective from which all existence, not only '*Atsilut* (and above), are seen as expressions and extensions of the deity, rather than as "others" who relate to the divine in one way or another.

^{cccxxxii} Ar. *Ihu we-ḥayohi we-garmohi ḥad*. This is interpreted in Ḥabad thought as referring to the relationship of "He" (the divine essence) with his lights (vital forces) and vessels (bones); see *Tanya, Iggeret ha-qodesh*, epistle XX. On lights and vessels, see above, note on Ch. V. While the existence of lights, and more so vessels, might imply multiplicity, in the realm of '*Atsilut* they are all united with the essence, and do not pose a conflict with the divine oneness.

^{cccxxxiii} Using the imagery of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, Eden is interpreted by the Kabbalists to refer to the Sefirah of *ḥokhmah* in '*Atsilut*, while the river which emerges from there is associated with *binah*. Within the garden, the world of '*Atsilut* generally, it remains one river. Once it extends beyond the garden, it "separates," entering a realm of separation from the divine as well as one of entities that are individualized and distinct from one another.

^{cccxxxiv} Heb. '*olamot be-peshiṭut we-'elo-hut be-hiṭhadshut*. The existence of the "world," creation and independent existence, is taken for granted, while the existence of the divine requires justification in the realm of *BeY'A*. The reverse is true of the realm of '*Atsilut*, where '*elo-hut be-peshiṭut we-'olamot be-hiṭhadshut*. This is another expression of the paradigmatic shift that distinguishes '*Atsilut* and *BeY'A*. Thus the concealment in *BeY'A* does not represent ignorance of divinity, but rather the mode in which it is apprehended: that is, *be-hiṭhadshut*. There is worship of the divine, but it is referred to as going "after the Lord," i.e. perceiving the deity from behind, only through reason and not through direct experience.

^{cccxxxv} The place of the Temple is understood to be an area in which divinity was readily apparent, even at the level of '*Atsilut*. See *Tanya*, ch. 53 (elsewhere?).

^{cccxxxvi} As will be elaborated, '*Amaleq* represents the separation from and concealment of divinity that poses the primary problem of the exilic period.

^{cccxxxvii} In many places in Ḥabad thought, the desert is described as a place devoid of divine revelation, designated as a land in which "no Man has settled," referring to the "supernal Man." This is contrasted with settled city life, where the "glory of a Man (is) to dwell in a house" ("house" also referring to the Temple) (see *bati le-ganni* 5718 re: "for he found her in the field"). This accounts for the experience in the desert one in which "you followed me." It should be noted that in other sources, including within Ḥabad, the period of Israelite sojourning in the desert is described as one of incomparable spirituality and closeness to the divine.

^{cccxxxviii} I.e. it was the rear position that rendered Israel vulnerable to attack; see Rashi loc cit.

^{cccxxxix} See 5717 ch. VIII.

^{cccxl} The nape of the neck is vulnerable to severing (i.e. loss of access to the experience of divinity) by '*Amaleq*. It is noteworthy that Kabbalistically, '*Amaleq* is understood to bring about a sundering of the divine name itself (see Rashi, Ex.; *Torah or*, sar hamshkim metzar hagon).

^{cccxli} I.e. worship despite being limited to a "rear" perception.

^{cccxlii} This contrasts with the above-cited verse from Exodus which states that "I will certainly eradicate etc.," placing the onus upon G-d. Only when one attains a level of divine service of *panim* can one successfully eradicate '*Amaleq* themselves. Thus the first verse refers to the period of exile, while the second (in Deuteronomy) refers to the time after the Temple is rebuilt.

^{cccxliv} Of the Hasidic masters. Their teachings regarding *tsimsum be-shvil ha-giluy*, which (as mentioned) must be applied in personal conduct, represent a directive to rise above the state of *aḥor* in divine service, even at a time that, as a rule, is characterized by the *aḥor* relationship.

^{cccxliv} Heb. *ahavah be-ta'anugim*; see Song of Songs, 7:7. See *Tanya*, ch. 10, and elsewhere. "Love of delights" is unattainable in "this world." It is a gift that the soul enjoys in Paradise, or that may be granted one in this

life as a gift, not a result of effort. Thus even a love that results from one's contemplation of the internal aspects (i.e. those that transcend creation) of the divine do not produce true worship in the manner of *panim*.

^{cccxliv} The Talmud interprets this as “today – you do them; tomorrow, you will receive reward.” Today, in the present life, one cannot hope for a love that is a glimmer of the reward to be received in the world-to-come. Rather, the priority is that one do, even without true feeling.

^{cccxlv} See Psalms, 109:22; *Tanya*, chs. 1, 13, 15. The word *hallal* means “dead,” but it can also have the connotation of “hollow”; see Reshimot on *Tanya*. In *Tanya*, this phrase is used to describe the *tsaddiq*, who has no evil urge, no desire to sin; this is contrasted with the *benoni*, the intermediate individual, identified as the “measure of every man,” whose evil urge is active, but who suppresses it. See following note.

^{cccxlvi} See Zechariah, 3:4; *Tanya* ch. 9. The soul is said to have three “garments,” viz. thought, speech and action. When these are involved in unholy matters, or even in the innocent partaking of the enjoyments of the physical, they are called “soiled garments,” and they obstruct comprehensive and ideal love for G-d. The *tsaddiq* is one who has removed these garments, who takes no pleasure in physical delights. The rare *tsaddiq* is the one who can attain a divine service at the level of *panim* and the love akin to the delight of the world-to-come in this world as well; it is not, however, the measure of every man.

^{cccxlviii} This may shed light on the dichotomy of the desert as relating to *ahor* and its lofty status (see above). The differentiation might be between before and after the Torah was given.

^{cccxliv} Heb. *netinat ko 'ah*. It is a given that one cannot attain even spiritual achievements without divine assistance. Here this is described as the ability for divine service of *panim*.

^{ccccl} The evil urge and the inability to directly experience divinity is merely external, while at one's core, there is no obstruction or concealment, and no dearth of conviction.

^{ccccli} The context of this ruling is the giving of a bill of divorce. Halachah prescribes that a husband must give a bill of divorce willingly, otherwise it is invalid. In the event that a husband is legally bound to divorce but is recalcitrant, Maimonides prescribes that he be coerced; this does not constitute an involuntary divorce, based on the justification cited in the text. A Jew's true desire is to conform to the divine will as expressed in the Halachah. This ruling is oft-cited by the Rebbe to prove that at the core, a Jew always remains loyal to G-d.

^{cccclii} See Esther, 2:20.

^{ccccliii} Thus its true essence is of a like mind with G-d. This is true for the soul of the *benoni* as much as for the *tsaddiq's* soul.

^{ccccliv} See note on 5717, ch. I.

^{cccclv} Heb. *netinat ko 'ah we-he'arah we-hashpa 'ah as le-hashpa 'ah geluyah*. These correspond with the different modes of transferral between giver and receiver: *ko 'ah*, *or*, and *shepha'* (force, light, and effluence). The distinctions between these is discussed in many places in Habad teaching; see e.g. *Bati le-ganni*, vol. 2, 490 (*or* and *ko 'ah*); *ibid*, 429 (*or* and *shepha'*); and in the references there. The addition of *hashpa 'ah geluyah* would seem to emphasize that this potential becomes utterly tangible and readily applied.

^{cccclvi} The regular divine service of *ahor* requires a periodic infusion through periodic experience of a level of *panim* for it to be maintained. Not only is this transcendent experience possible, it is necessary for the maintenance of the lower state of awareness. This theme will be developed in the following chapters.

^{cccclvii} See *Tanya*, ch. 35 ff; this maxim was oft-quoted by the Rebbe.

^{cccclviii} Heb. *hayut* (energy), *ne'imut* (enjoyment), and *ta'anug* (pleasure). A religious act devoid of these fulfills the minimum requirement of “deed” (which is of primary importance). If done with *kavanah* (intention, focus), associated in *Tanya* with the passion of love and awe of the divine, the act possesses a “soul” as well (see *ibid*, ch. 38). This would seem to correlate with *hayut* and *ne'imut*. *Ta'anug* would imply a more profound identification with the divine will embodied in the act, such that the worshipper partakes of the divine pleasure derived from it, presumably the purview of the advanced level of the *tsaddiq*. Nevertheless, the Rebbe suggests that it is possible for a *benoni* to experience this as well, albeit transiently.

^{cccclix} Although he only says “I am willing” due to coercion, since, however, the law of the Torah recognizes this as a voluntary divorce, and the Torah is “true” (*torat emet*), it follows that the husband is indeed willing, at any rate at a subliminal level. This latent “willingness” motivates and justifies the actual act of giving the bill of divorce.

^{cccclx} This again is based on the requirement to recite this passage being mandated by the “Torah of truth.” If every Jew is required to proclaim their love for G-d “with all your might” daily, they must be capable of it. This obligation (unlike many others) is in full force at all times, even when the Temple no longer stands, and thus illuminates the state of the soul even during the exilic period. It is possible that this claim could (at least arguably) not be made from the ruling regarding the bill of divorce. Alternatively, this requirement is 1) daily, and 2) entirely voluntary, underscoring the eminent accessibility of the divine service of *panim*.

^{cccclxi} Explained in the previous chapters.

^{ccclxii} See note on 5717, ch. VI.

^{ccclxiii} Heb. *shevatim*. In rabbinic parlance, Jacob's sons are referred to as the *shevatim*, and not only the tribes that descended from them.

^{ccclxiv} Before his death, his sons reassured Jacob that they maintained the belief in Abrahamic monotheism like him. Thus Deuteronomy 6:4 is interpreted as directed to Jacob: "Hear, O Israel... the Lord is one."

^{ccclxv} I.e. how is it conceivable that Jacob's sons even come under suspicion of entertaining any other kind of belief?

^{ccclxvi} To answer the two questions posed above: A) They were not only saying that they believed in one G-d, but that this was a result of Jacob's own belief. B) Without Jacob's belief, they could not have attained the belief they did, but would have maintained an inferior level of belief.

^{ccclxvii} Ar. *Merkavta tata'ah*. Kabbalistic sources speak of an upper and lower "chariot," elaborating on the vision of Ezekiel 1, known in rabbinic sources as the *merkavah*. "Chariot" denotes utter *biṭṭul* to the divine (see *Tanya*, ch. 35; *Liqqutey torah* ??). The upper chariot is the level of *'Atsilut*, and is embodied by the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The lower chariot is the level of *Beri'ah*, and is embodied by the tribes.

^{ccclxviii} I assume this is because this divine name consists of the first two letters of the Tetragrammaton, which correspond to the Sephirot of *ḥokhmah* and *binah* respectively (see above and at length in (notes to) 5717). Since the world of *'Atsilut* is associated with *ḥokhmah*, so is this divine name.

^{ccclxix} Thus the realm of *'Atsilut* is not their rightful place; yet, on occasion (such as during the pilgrimage festivals?) they are granted access (see *Tanya*, ch. 39).

^{ccclxx} As will be explained, the divine unity expressed by the word *eḥad*.

^{ccclxxi} See *Tanya*, *Sha'ar ha-yihud weha-emunah*, ch. 7; *Iggarot qodesh* (the Rebbe), vol. ?? Traditionally, after reciting the verse beginning "*shema*" (hear O Israel), Jews add the phrase *barukh shem kevod malkhuto le-'olam wa'ed* (blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever). The Zohar (cited in *Tanya*, *ibid*) associates the words *eḥad* (with which Deut. 6:4 concludes) and *wa'ed* (ending the phrase of *barukh shem*), explaining that they refer to two levels of divine unity, superior unity and inferior unity. The concept of the transmutation of letters is raised in *Tanya*, *ibid*, chs. 1 and 7; it suggests that the result of transmuting an original (divine) word is a lessening of the intensity of the "light," along the lines of the "screening" and filtering mentioned above. Thus *wa'ed* is *eḥad*, divine unity, but in a weaker and inferior state.

^{ccclxxii} As noted above, the patriarchs themselves represent the upper chariot (*merkavta illa'a*) of the world of *'Atsilut*. This is expressed in the Midrashic expression cited here, *ha-avot hen hen ha-merkavah* (the patriarchs are the very chariot); i.e. they are the consummate chariot as it is in *'Atsiut*.

^{ccclxxiii} See *Tanya*, ch. 13. Thus Jacob not only embodies the unity of *eḥad*, but also the transmission of that consciousness to the realms below *'Atsilut*. (This is a characteristic specific to Jacob, and not the other patriarchs.)

^{ccclxxiv} See note to 5717, ch. VI.

^{ccclxxv} Heb. *derushim*. Synonymous with *ma'amarim*, the more commonly used term.

^{ccclxxvi} "They" refers to the Sephirot above *malkhut*, which are united with one another and with divinity in *'Atsilut* (see above re: *ihu we-hayohi we-garmohi ḥad*). "She" refers to the tenth Sephirah of *malkhut*, which enters into and engages with the realms of *BeY'A*. "Throne" refers to the world of *Beri'ah*, the "world of the throne." Incidentally, the throne is synonymous with the *merkavah* of *Beri'ah*.

^{ccclxxvii} "One with one" implies that the two unities (superior and inferior) are united, as the Rebbe goes on to emphasize.

^{ccclxxviii} The unification of "one with one."

^{ccclxxix} See *Pardess rimonim*, Gate 21, ch. 7. The combinations of the six Sephirot of *ze'eyr anpin* with one another produce twelve possibilities, when the six are conceived of as "extremities," or directions. Each "direction" abuts four others, generating twelve "corners." This is a development that takes place in the Sephirot when they reach the world of *Beri'ah*.

^{ccclxxx} Heb. *biṭṭul ha-yesh le-'ayin*. Creation is the emergence of "being" (*yesh*) from "naught" (*'ayin*), and divine service strives to reverse this process by sublimating the *yesh* into the *'ayin*. This is considered the inferior unity, because it implies semantically and conceptually that the *yesh* continues to exist in some capacity. Superior unity entails utter *biṭṭul* (*be-metsi'ut* (out of existence)), which is the true *eḥad*.

^{ccclxxxi} The effect of the *hamshakhah* from Jacob to the tribes, then, is that on account of Jacob's superior unity the tribes experience inferior unity. This illustrates how their lower level unity is dependent on an infusion from the higher level of unity. Without it, they would not experience inferior unity either. (It remains to be speculated what the realm of *BeY'A* has access to on its own.) The section of *Tanya* called *Sha'ar ha-yihud weha-emunah* treats this topic at length, and is basic to a full understanding of this chapter.

^{ccclxxxii} Since all existence, including souls, derives from the Torah, there must be a parallel phenomenon in the Torah itself of the dimensions of *panim* and *aḥor* and the irradiation or *hamshakhah* of the former into the latter.

^{ccclxxxiii} *Derushim* (see above).

^{ccclxxxiv} The additional level is that of “bride.”

^{ccclxxxv} It is unclear to me why the notion of *morashah* as inheritance is at all problematic. Here and below the discourse seeks to support this interpretation, although it would seem to be the literal meaning of the word. The Talmud interprets the word also as “betrothed” (see below), but this is certainly the *derash* interpretation (using the expression of “do not read”), while “inheritance” is not.

^{ccclxxxvi} Heb. *derash*. See previous note.

^{ccclxxxvii} I.e. a person cannot withhold inheritance from their heirs, for the Torah mandates it, and one cannot make a stipulation to free oneself from a Torah requirement. In practice there are legal loopholes to control who inherits; however in principle, inheritance is inevitable.

^{ccclxxxviii} The recipient’s actions or even status have no influence on the bestowal of the gift.

^{ccclxxxix} There is a concept that a gift is given to someone who has brought some kind of satisfaction to the giver, although it is not remuneration and thus not commensurate to the act that inspired it. It is also not expected.

^{ccclxc} More precisely: “If [one says] I have toiled but not achieved, do not believe; I have not toiled and achieved, do not believe; I have toiled and I have achieved, believe it.”

^{ccclxci} Heb. *qore we-shoneh*. *Qore* indicates the reading of *miqra*, Scripture (Tanakh); *shoneh* indicates the study of *mishnah* (the Oral Torah).

^{ccclxcii} The Holy One’s reading and recitation of Torah introduces the presence of the divine into the Torah and particularly into the experience of Torah study on the part of the human who is studying. This is interpreted in Ḥabad parlance as “drawing divinity into Torah.” In this way, the human student of Torah contributes an element to it that is not present automatically. This *hamshakhah* is an instance of the phenomenon of an “arousal from below” eliciting an “arousal from above” (referred to below), where the response from above is commensurate to the human initiative.

^{ccclxciii} In the dynamic of bridegroom and bride, the bridegroom is the *mashpi’a* (giver) and the bride is the *mekabel* (recipient). Israel, in contributing to Torah, acts in the capacity of bridegroom.

^{ccclxciv} According to Kabbalistic sources, the present world was preceded by a world of “chaos,” *Tohu*. This world was characterized by “excessive lights and inadequate vessels,” and was unsustainable. Its “vessels” shattered due to the intensity of its lights, and the shards fell below and became embedded in every physical item in our world. This world is referred to a *Tiqqun*, “rectification,” and it is characterized by “excessive vessels and inadequate lights.” The purpose is to rectify the debacle of *Tohu* by elevating the shards, or “sparks,” from within the physical back to their source, thereby generating once again the excessive light of *Tohu* in a sustainable fashion. Elevation of the sparks is termed *berur*, “extraction.” The realm of *Tohu* is associated with Esau, while *Tiqqun* is the purview of Jacob. See *Mystical Concepts*, 143 ff.

^{ccclxcv} Heb. *yorshim*. The word connotes inheritance, as well as taking possession via conquest. It can also connote driving out the original inhabitants (e.g. Deut. ??), the reverse side of taking possession. In this context the word is used with both connotations in mind.

^{ccclxcvi} Acronym of *keter*, *hokhmah*, *binah*; these are (in one schema; an alternate schema has the first three as *hokhmah*, *binah*, *da’at* (*ḤaBaD*)) the first three Sefirot (or *gimmel rishonot*; see below), in this case of the world of *Tohu*. According to the Lurianic system, every world or level comprises its own version of the Ten Sefirot. The shattering affected only the lower Sefirot of *Tohu* (*zayin taḥtonot*); thus “rectifying” the shattering allows one to access levels beyond the initial debacle.

^{ccclxcvii} Since an inheritance is not earned. Rather, here the worshipper’s claim to *KaḤaB de-Tohu* is due to Jacob’s be(com)ing a brother to Esau; see below.

^{ccclxcviii} *KaḤaB de-Tohu* is an inheritance, by right. The level of gift is, therefore, beyond *Tohu* altogether (see below).

^{ccclxcix} This chapter is largely an abridgment of the discourse of Maharash. The etceteras are in the original transcript, indicating the abbreviation of longer statements in the source.

^{cd} A Kabbalistic principle oft-cited in Ḥabad teaching is that *be-’it’aruta de-letata ‘it’aruta de-le’eyla* (by arousal from below there is an arousal from above). This parallels the *ha’al’ah/hamshakhah* dynamic. It also suggests that the response from on high is commensurate to the worship that elicited it. However, see *Liqqutey torah* Leviticus, 2c ff.

^{cdi} Clearly the study during the “first three hours” is of a different quality than the corresponding reading etc. when an individual studies.

^{cdii} Why is G-d described as “sitting?” Especially given that, as often quoted in Ḥabad thought, “he has no bodily form,” this is a problematic anthropomorphism.

^{cdiii} Emphasis on “equal to them.” Heb. *ke-negdo*.

^{cdiv} The Holy One lowers the divine “head” (presumably associated with “the first three”) in a voluntary act of sitting, i.e. auto-descent.

^{cdv} Within the schema of Ten Sephirot (at whatever level), the (intellectual) first three are considered transcendent of Creation, which preoccupies primarily the lower seven. In this context, I understand the discourse to refer to the “initial three” within *adam qadmon*.

^{cdvi} This is based on the principle that “the Holy One does not dwell in a flawed place, but only in a perfect place.” While the referenced *hamshakhah* is automatic, it does not occur without the recipient (place) being perfected to the extent humanly possible. See *Liqutey torah*, *ibid*.

The reference to “one’s study in hand” (*we-talmudo be-yado*) is to the Talmudic statement “Happy is one who arrives here (Heaven) with their study in hand.” It is not clear to me why this indicates the requisite effort that serves as the platform specifically for unsolicited divine grace.

^{cdvii} Heb. *penimiyut ha-torah*. The “revealed” Torah refers generally to the legal (Talmudic) elements of Torah, while the “interiority” of Torah refers to the mystical teachings.

^{cdviii} It is unclear whether this is meant as a proof-text for the notion of the measured aspect of Torah, or that of the unlimited element. At times it is noted that this verse does not negate any measurement from Torah; rather, its measure is of gargantuan proportions. In the context here, it would seem to relate to the unlimited aspect of Torah, and to serve as a proof-text for the notion that the Torah is without measure. This is because the limited aspect of Torah was supported by the idea that it is possible to study Torah in its entirety. Assuming that the verse from Proverbs is meant to indicate that, large as it might be, the Torah still has a limit, it would still conflict with the idea that one could study the entire Torah, for a person cannot contain something that is “longer than the earth etc.”

^{cdix} Emphasis on “with him” (Heb. *etslo*) and “before him” (Heb. *le-phanaw*); i.e. something that does not relate to Creation, but is with G-d and “before” G-d, i.e. related to the aspect of *panim* (as elaborated above). See (?? (ראדה' אצלו אמון).

^{cdx} In the context of the discussion thus far, the Torah which it is within one’s capacity to study, and the commensurate divine response to that study (the levels of toil, inheritance, and bride) are the *aḥor* of Torah; while the element of “gift” is the *panim* of Torah. It is actualized when the *aḥor* elements are fully realized; thus there is a bridge between the *aḥor* and the *panim*.

^{cdxi} See also *Tanya, quntres aḥaron* (sec. 6), “*Dawid zemirot qarit lahu.*”

^{cdxii} Heb. *zemirot*.

^{cdxiii} Heb. *shir*. It is unclear to me what semantic difference is being drawn between the synonyms of *zemer* and *shir*. It is possibly based on the verse [Psalms, 42:9] “At night, his *shir* is with me etc.” As it is conjugated with the possessive pronoun, it indicates that it is something uniquely associated with G-d, and therefore transcending any “otherly” concerns.

^{cdxiv} The verses cited above from Proverbs, as well as the verse from Job here (which concludes “only G-d has understood her way”), indicate that wisdom/Torah is something personal to G-d, rather than belonging to the human or created realm.

^{cdxv} Limitation is a feature of creation. Prior to or beyond creation, there is no need for nor presumption of limitation.

^{cdxvi} We have access to the interiority of Torah. It also informs our study of the “revealed” Torah (as is being discussed). Thus David could be faulted for mischaracterizing the nature of the Torah, since the interior level was not inaccessible to him.

^{cdxvii} Heb. *ṭ'amim*. This word connotes flavor, as well as rationale. It also is the term for the traditional cantillation notes with which the Torah is read in the synagogue. Kabbalistically, the Scripture contains four semiotic components (two of which remain unwritten), viz. *ṭ'amim* (cantillations), *nequdot* (vowel pointings), *taggim* (letter adornments), *'otiyot* (letters). Only the letters are intelligible to the average individual, while the first three aspects allude to the mysteries of the Torah. *Ṭ'amim*, connoting flavor (pleasure) and reason, and being first in this taxonomy, presumably represents the divine pleasure in the Torah within the divine self, transcending any other consideration.

^{cdxviii} The Levites transported the components of the desert Tabernacle on ox-drawn carts, except for the most sacred items which were carried on their person (Numbers ??). The ark in particular was to be carried upon the shoulders of the priest (Maimonides??; see Joshua ??). David was punished by the priest 'Uzza being struck down when the ark was transported by cart (Samuel ??).

^{cdxix} The tablets were inscribed on “both sides,” and additionally “on this side and on that,” for a total of four sides.

^{cdxx} Carrying the tablets on the shoulder enacts the influence of the *panim* on the *ahor*.

^{cdxxi} Within Torah itself, since it derives from a primordial state as the tablets, its *ahor* aspect is never fully detached from its *panim* aspect.

^{cdxxii} On an individual level, one must have their study of the “revealed” Torah be informed by their study of the interior elements of Torah. In the terms of a common Ḥabad saying, that one “not forget about the Giver of the Torah.”

^{cdxxiii} From the High Holiday liturgy. Forgetting is a consequence of the obscuring of divinity, while in the presence of “your glorious throne” all is known. See *Tanya*, ch. 37; *ibid*, *Quntres aḥaron*, *ibid*. David’s lapse of memory thus was a result of having overlooked the full implications of the Torah’s divinity.

^{cdxxiv} Yiddish in the original transcript. “Lies.” One is totally immersed in the subject.

^{cdxxv} David was taken to task not merely for focusing on the *ahor* of Torah, but because his perception of the *ahor* was not infused with the awareness of *panim*.

^{cdxxvi} The Talmud interprets the verse “why was the land destroyed etc.? And G-d said, for having abandoned my Torah etc.” [Isaiah??] as meaning that Jerusalem was destroyed not for neglecting Torah study, but for neglecting to bless G-d for the Torah prior to study, thereby ignoring the fact that it is G-d’s Torah.

^{cdxxvii} Abba Binyamin prayed that he be able to pray as soon as he rises in the morning, so that his prayers be recited before any other activity during the day, including his Torah study.

^{cdxxviii} The blessing over the Torah, and the morning prayers in general, have the effect of drawing divinity into Torah, i.e. of infusing the level of *ahor* with that of *panim*.

^{cdxxix} This topic was raised above, ch. VIII, relating to the respective levels of Jacob and the tribes. In the following chapter it is elaborated further.

^{cdxxx} Much of what is discussed in this chapter was already explained in ch. VIII. It is repeated here presumably 1) in order to cite from Rashab (see note on 5717, ch. VIII); and 2) in Rashab’s teaching we see the explicit association of the elements of *panim* and *ahor* within Torah and their counterparts in divine service.

^{cdxxxi} See end of ch. VIII and note there.

^{cdxxxii} These are not only two levels of souls (Jacob vs. the tribes), but also to modes of divine service. This arises more explicitly from *Quntres ets ha-hayyim*.

^{cdxxxiii} Cited above, ch. VII, from Maimonides.

^{cdxxxiv} I.e. most people, especially in the current exilic period, cannot attain the level of Superior Unity.

^{cdxxxv} This topic was also covered above, ch. VII. It was addressed in an inserted passage from the Sabbath discourse. It was apparently repeated on Saturday night (in abbreviated form), but placed here.

^{cdxxxvi} This last sentence appears redundant. Possibly it is alluding, as noted above, that the difference between *panim* and *ahor* must not be absolute, and furthermore it cannot mean that one at the level of *ahor* periodically “visits” the level of *panim*, but that even when at the level of *ahor* there must always remain an afterglow of *panim*. Otherwise it ceases to even be *ahor*, and becomes distanced from divinity.

^{cdxxxvii} This represents a pillar of Rashab’s argument for the study of *pnimiyut ha-torah* by all, including the students of his yeshiva, since it is required to maintain even a minimum of intensity in divine service.

^{cdxxxviii} *Be-levav shalem*, “with a complete heart,” is associated with *sheleymut*, perfection.

^{cdxxxix} “Perfect” divine service is identified with Superior Unity.

^{cdxl} See note at the beginning of the discourse re: *’iqari*. Here, the “primary *shekhinah*” would be *panim*, and the nether realms *ahor*.

^{cdxli} Lit. “the holy ancient one.” Also known as *’atiq yommin* (based on Daniel, 7:9), “ancient of days,” or simply *’atiq*. In Kabbalah this level is that of the interiority (*pnimiyut*) of *keter*, the highest Sephirah, or the level that precedes the Sephirot (as it usually is in Ḥabad thought). *Keter* is subdivided into two layers: *hitsoniyut* (externality) *ha-keter*, also called *’arikh ’anpin*, associated with the faculty of *ratson* (will); and *pnimiyut ha-keter*, associated with *ta’anug* (delight).

^{cdxlii} This level would be associated with the divine desire (*nit’aweh*) for a “dwelling in the nether realms” (see *Tanya*, ch. 36), and the delight that is anticipated when creation attains its intended perfection in the eschaton. At present we are aware of the divine will entailed in fulfilling the Torah, while in the future the divine delight embedded within the commandments will become apparent.

^{cdxliii} Although we have no access to *pnimiyut ’atiqa qadisha* currently, it is our current actions that enable its ultimate disclosure.

^{cdxliv} See *Tanya*, ch. 36, and *Reshimot* on *Tanya* *ibid*(?) re: the various ages of the eschaton.

^{cdxlv} It is interesting that this verse is oft-cited throughout the *Bati le-ganni* corpus, of course with special emphasis in the discourse of 5717.

^{cdxlvi} Possibly alluding to the disclosure of the *penimiyut* of the soul and the *penimiyut* of the divine.

^{cdxlvii} This phrase, taken from the Sabbath liturgy, refers to those who taste of, i.e. observe, the Sabbath. Kabbalistic teaching attaches significance to tasting of the Sabbath food on Friday in anticipation of the delight of the Sabbath (*'oneg shabbat*). Here the discourse suggests that the teachings of *penimiyut ha-torah* which we have access to today represent a foretaste of the revelations of the messianic age. These empower the worshipper at the present time to create, through their service, the possibility of the future revelations.

^{cdxlviii} *Penimiyut ha-torah* is here explicitly associated with the teachings of Hasidism, and particularly their Ḥabad iterations.

^{cdxlix} Heb. *neśsi'im* (sing. *naśsi*). The term connotes a royal station (as in Ez. ??), as well as a political position. Thus the author of the Mishnah is known as R. Yehudah ha-naśsi (see ??). In modern Hebrew it is the word for “president.” The term came into use in Ḥabad in the (sixth generation?) initially connoting the rebbe’s position as president of the Ḥabad Hasidic association, but was broadened in (the Rebbe’s?) thought to the concept of the unitary leader of the generation (*neśsi ha-dor*; see Rashi’s comment on Num. ??).

^{cdl} I.e. Rayyats.

^{cdli} See above, ch. VIII, and note there, re: relation of *biṭṭul be-metsiuti* to *anim*.

^{cdlii} Heb. *hakhanah qerovah*.

^{cdliii} This is an interpretation of the passage in the well-known letter of the Baal Shem Tov (*Keter shem tov*, ??), in which he asked the messiah “when will the master arrive?” and he was answered “when your wellsprings will burst forth to the outside.” The wellsprings refer to the teachings of *penimiyut ha-torah* etc. These burst forth to the outside, i.e. they are accessible to all. This results in the “arrival of the master,” referring to the messiah king.

^{cdliv} The Midrash [] identifies five names by which the soul is called (*nephesh, ru'ah, neshamah, hayah, yehidah*). Kabbalistic sources speak of these as five levels of the soul, *yehidah* being the loftiest and most essential. In Ḥabad teaching these five levels correspond to the faculties of expression, emotion, intellect (the “internal” levels), will, and essence (the “encompassing” levels). The messiah is the embodiment of the *yehidah* of Israel as a whole, while *penimiyut ha-torah* is the *yehidah* of the Torah.

^{cdlv} “Redemption” or “victory” can be achieved through battle, i.e. through subjugating a recalcitrant foe; it can also be achieved “in peace,” i.e. through inducing erstwhile foes to accept and support the victor. These two methods are associated with the “revealed” and “interior” dimensions of Torah. The future redemption, associated as it is with *penimiyut ha-torah* and therefore with peace, is thus the most perfect redemption.

^{cdlvi} R. Schneur Zalman wrote that he was released from his imprisonment “while reading this verse” on 19 Kislev, 5559 (??, 1798). This date became the Ḥabad holiday known as *ḥag ha-ge'ulah* and *rosh ha-shanah le-ḥassidut* (see Hayom Yom et al), and these words were set to a tune that is traditionally sung on that day. It is noteworthy that the Rebbe associates this verse with Rayyats’s *hilulla* here (see SHM vol ? re: 12 Tammuz).

^{cdlvii} The book of Psalms is traditionally divided into portions corresponding to the days of the week, to be completed weekly, as well as portions corresponding to the days of the month, to be completed monthly. Psalm 55 is part of the portion for Tuesday, which was the day R. Schneur Zalman was released, and therefore why he happened to be reciting this psalm at the moment of his release. It is also part of the portion for the tenth day of the month, and therefore recited on 10 Shevat. (I personally recall listening to the Rebbe leading the prayers on the 10 Shevat, 5752 (??, 1992), and hearing recite this verse with special emphasis.)

^{cdlviii} See below, that the word “primary” is read as referring to the *Shekhinah* itself, not (only) to its place.

^{cdlix} The discourse has now come full circle, to tying its discussion back to the topic of the presence of the *yod* within the (rear of the) *dalet*. This is the idea of the interior light being present even within the as-yet-deficient (impoverished) state of *aḥor*.

^{cdlx} Again, a moment of commentary about the overall message of *Bati le-ganni* (see above, note to ch. IV).

^{cdlxi} *Iqar shekhinah*, i.e. the core level of *shekhinah*, the “*panim*” of the *shekhinah*; see 5711 (cited in the footnote) at length.

^{cdlxii} See *B.l. – 5731* that this is included in the meaning of the words “nether realms”; that the *shekhinah* dwell below **on account of** the nether beings, i.e. human efforts.

^{cdlxiii} While it is difficult to discern specific significance to this phrase in the context of the discussion, or to its placement in the Sabbath discourse but not in the Saturday night discourse, it should be noted that the Rebbe often concluded his discourses with a kind of blessing or prayerful wish, often with similar terms if in slightly altered sequence. The *hozrim*, those who memorized and reviewed the discourses after the *farbrengens*, endeavored to preserve the unique locution of each such conclusion to the extent possible.

^{cdlxiv} Heb. *tsiv'ot HaWaYaH*; also translates as “armies of *HaWaYaH*,” see below.

^{cdlxv} These are the generals who distribute the sealed-up royal treasures to the military men to enable them to be victorious. It is clear from the context that these treasures are identified as the teachings of (Ḥabad) Hasidism, the “wellsprings” referred to by the Ba’al Shem Tov, the *penimiyut ha-torah*. This, then, is a meta-teaching regarding the significance of this discourse.

^{cdlxvi} A reference to Lev. 26:13.

^{cdlxvii} While Rayyats is apparently distinguished here from the messiah himself, there is clearly some messianic attribute ascribed to him here. Note that the “he” who will teach Torah to the entire nation could refer to either.

^{cdlxviii} See note at the end of 5717.